

A.R.T.S. Job Cooperative Project

2018-2019

Description of Organization:

A.R.T.S.: Adaptive Art. Respite & Therapeutic play. Services was established in 2008 by Cynthia Best, a pediatric Physical Therapist and parent of one child with Autism and one child with ADHD. A.R.T.S. was created to offer extracurricular activities and summer camp programs to children and adults with special needs. In addition, A.R.T.S was designed to help each student identify their strengths, incorporate therapeutic (OT, PT, Speech and behavioral) goals into their art projects, develop recreational activities, practice peer interactions and explore vocational skills. We offer paid summer camp positions for our teens and have started an A.R.T.S. Family Job Cooperative in the effort to provide internship opportunities to our older students. The goal is for each student to explore vocations that align with their strengths and passions.

A.R.T.S. mission is to give children and adults with special needs the opportunity to create functional art projects while encouraging therapeutic goals, socialization with peers, exploration of vocational skills and respite opportunities for caregivers.

A.R.T.S. offers adaptive art classes and summer camps to children, teens and adults with special needs. Our programs service students of all ages and levels of ability. Primarily, our students fall somewhere on the Autism Spectrum, but we also provide services to students with other diagnoses including Down's syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Over the next three years, our goal at A.R.T.S. is to expand our paid summer employment opportunities at A.R.T.S. Camp for our teens with special needs. Camp positions are created for each teen camper. We align their strengths, passions and skills with a job they help create for themselves to perform the week of summer camp. We have just started an A.R.T.S. Family Job Cooperative where we match up teen and young adult students and

their special interests with A.R.T.S. parents who work in related jobs. This gives our students the chance to visit work sites in the community and explore the job requirements with an adult who understands them, for they parent their own child with special needs. We want to grow this project into The A.R.T.S. Job Cooperative, establishing work and internship opportunities, not only with A.R.T.S. parents, but also employers within our community. Our community currently falls along Route 89 from Concord to Lebanon, NH with a few students from southern NH and VT.

Our Board is made up of Cynthia Best, Susan Cowan Morse, Laura Jean Whitcomb, Carol Mac Donald, Sarah Lewis and Frederick Best. Cynthia Best MS, PT is the creator of A.R.T.S. She serves as President, but is also the primary service provider, grant writer, accountant and A.R.T.S. Camp Director. Susan Cowan Morse is a teacher and creator of Tap Your Brilliance Learning Center. She and Cynthia Best collaborate on program development and will be working together to expand job opportunities and internships for our students in the community. Laura Jean Whitcomb is a parent and amazing advocate for her son on the autism spectrum who has been involved in A.R.T.S. since the beginning. She is also creator of Kearsarge Magazine, Upper Valley Life and Kids Stuff Magazine. She is helping to create internship opportunities at her business for the students at A.R.T.S. Carol Mac Donald is a retired teacher. She serves as camp staff every summer guiding campers in their summer jobs at A.R.T.S. Camp. Sarah Lewis is a paralegal and helps to navigate any legal questions that arise. Frederick Best is a retired chemical engineer who has worked in his own business, Johnson & Johnson and the computer industry. He serves as financial consultant to A.R.T.S.

Purpose of Grant:

There are not a lot of extracurricular activities available to children and adults with special needs and their families in our community. There are even fewer opportunities for teens and adults with special needs to explore their personal strengths and develop vocational skills. There are just a few programs in the state of NH that do address vocational goals with young adults with special needs. But none of these programs start early enough, many wait until adulthood to even begin the process. In addition, the jobs are very limited, most are volunteer positions. The jobs that are paid are often not motivating for the student, such as bagging groceries. Our goal at A.R.T.S. is to start identifying a student's personal strengths as early as middle school. Our focus in A.R.T.S. classes is to identify individual strengths and develop vocational skills using woodworking, sewing, pottery, photography, writing, and engineering projects. The A.R.T.S. Job Cooperative Program gives our teens and young adults with special needs the opportunity to build job skills that align with their

interests, passions, and personal strengths. Furthermore, they would actually get to put them into practice at job and internship locations throughout the community. Each student would get paid for their work, but more importantly get to practice the social skills needed to perform a job, build a work ethic, develop competent work skills and receive guidance from supportive employers in the community.

The majority of the funds from this grant will go directly to our teens and young adults with special needs in the form of paid internship and job opportunities both at A.R.T.S. and in the community. We have been creating paid summer job opportunities for our teens for the last 4 years. We use our individual class time to create each student a paid job for them to perform the week of A.R.T.S. Camp. The job aligns with the students' interests and they help to define the job and the expectations. Positions have included Camp Chef, Camp Counselor In- Training, Camp Counselor, Camp Photographer, Camp Re-cycler, Language Day Instructor, and Camping Day Instructor. We would like to expand this program to include more extensive job opportunities and to bring the pay rate up to minimum wage. Our goal is to create 8 paid Summer Art Camp positions for 2018 and pay each of these teens with special needs the NH State minimum wage per hour for their work.

We have already established the A.R.T.S. Parent Job Cooperative which utilizes the amazing parents of our students and their chosen careers as a forum for creating internship and job opportunities for our students. We match each student's strengths and passions with parents working in related fields. Our parents serve as patient and understanding mentors to these students. At this point in time, these positions are unpaid. This funding would allow students to receive minimum wage earnings for their work. Our goal is to create a directory of 25 or more A.R.T.S. parents guided internships or job opportunities by the end of 2018.

The remainder of the funds would be used to purchase some needed equipment and computer software programs for building job skills. We just completed a vocational classroom, complete with wood working equipment and a sewing area. The only piece of equipment still needed is a compact table saw with safety guard to be used for our students interested in woodworking and carpentry. Writing, illustration, graphic design & technology computer software programs would be purchased to teach these skills in individual & small group classes. We also have A.R.T.S. Publishing through which Cynthia Best, a parent and A.R.T.S. creator, initially self-published her book "Meet Me Where I'm At". This book just recently went under contract for publishing with Future Horizons, a publisher of Autism related works. A.R.T.S. Publishing and this new connection with Future Horizons gives us the opportunity to have students that are interested in writing, illustration, photography, graphic design and computers work together to publish books using the new software. Our goal is to have students work together to publish 1 book through A.R.T.S. Publishing by the end of 2018.

We have started creating internship opportunities with two local businesses, Yankee Cable and Kearsarge Magazine. Our goal is to create a directory of at least 12 local businesses willing to take on our teen and young adults with special needs for internships, summer jobs, and part time employment by the end of 2018. As we are establishing these positions, this grant money will be used to pay these students for their work initially. The goal is to progress students to the point of paid summer employment or part time employment with the employer.

Finally, it is our goal to include the students' family members, counselors, and school team in this process. As a student's interests, strengths and skills are identified, courses can be selected to expand these skills, and vocationally focused goals can be incorporated into their 504 or IEP plans. Our goal is to start with the Kearsarge Regional School District where the majority of our teens attend school and work closely with the Guidance Department at the Middle School and High School to add this vocational preparation piece to the IEP and 504 plans of at least 3 students with special needs by the end of 2018. It will then be our goal to implement this at other schools attended by our teens and young adults over the next few years. From there, we will add the Newport School district as we are starting to get referrals from students in the Newport area for services.

Qualifications:

Cynthia Best MS, PT is the creator of A.R.T.S. She serves as President, but is also the primary service provider, grant writer, accountant and A.R.T.S. Camp Director.

Carol Mac Donald is a retired teacher and Board member at A.R.T.S. She serves as camp staff every summer guiding campers in their Summer Jobs at A.R.T.S Camp.

Susan Cowan Morse is a teacher, creator of Tap Your Brilliance Learning Center, and an A.R.T.S. Board member. She and Cynthia Best will be collaborating to expand job opportunities and internships for our students in our community.

Evaluation:

Cynthia Best, A.R.T.S. President and primary service provider, evaluates each student's annual progress and determines if the goals set for the year have been met. She also evaluates the overall A.R.T.S. program goals at the end of each fiscal year. She then generates a report to the A.R.T.S.

Board Members, as well as completing the A.R.T.S. taxes, and files an Annual Report with the Office of the NH Attorney General Charitable Trust Unit. The measurable goals established for this grant, as stated in section 2: Purpose of grant will be reviewed by Cynthia Best. New goals will be set, and a new grant request will be written for submission for funding the following year's program goals. We are happy to send a report to grant donors reporting on the program's progress and the achievement of goals. It is available upon request.

Program Duration:

This is an ongoing program. The funds received will be utilized in 2018 to help expand the existing job opportunities through A.R.T.S. Camp, establish job opportunities through A.R.T.S. Publishing, enlarge The A.R.T.S. Parent Job Cooperative Directory, and establish The A.R.T.S. Job Cooperative Directory with employers in the community. A.R.T.S. Camp positions can also be subsidized by a portion of Camp Tuition being allocated to contribute to paying teens for their work at Camp. A portion of the proceeds from Cynthia Best's book "Meet Me Where I'm At" go to create scholarships for A.R.T.S. students, so this can be used to support individual student training for job readiness. A.R.T.S. has a few local donors who annually support our students. These donations can be utilized to support The A.R.T.S. Job Cooperative Program. Ultimately, our goal is to really prepare students for the workplace by teaching them the necessary skills and supporting them as they start out in the workplace. Therefore, the end goal is for employers in the community involved in The A.R.T.S. Job Cooperative to pay our students directly for their competent work as interns, summer or part-time employees.