

**MAY 22 IS  
CAPITAL DAY 2007**

*Please Save the Date!*  
**Join VSMAI in  
Lansing and Celebrate  
Arts for All**

Each Spring, we celebrate the arts and artists that are VSA arts of Michigan at a gathering in Lansing. Friends and supporters join us at the Michigan State Capital Rotunda to honor the Young Soloist and Educator of the Year, view this year's Emerging Artist Touring Exhibit, and enjoy VSAMI participants sharing their creativity.

Please plan to join us for an exciting afternoon of heart-warming fun and artistry, on Tuesday, May 22, 2007, 11:30 - 1:30, at the State Capital.

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**VSA arts of Michigan**

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**VSAMI announces 2007  
YOUNG SOLIST OF THE YEAR,  
and EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR**



**Ebony Francis Grundy,  
is VSAMI's Young  
Soloist of the Year 2007.**

Ebony, age 15, lives in Flint and began her singing with her church choir. In elementary school she was selected to sing Silent Night for a school assembly program.

"I held the microphone and wasn't even nervous. I welcome change; it let's me face a new challenge."

*con't on the page 3*

**Mrs. Dawn Shelton-Mitchell**, teacher at Mumford High School in the Detroit Public Schools is **VSAMI Educator of the Year for 2007.**

Previously Mrs. Shelton-Mitchell taught a group of students with autism at Durfee Middle School, and she traveled with the students to Mumford High School. Under Mrs. Mitchell's guidance, five of these students have had the opportunity to matriculate in a college preparatory academic program, in which all have been recognized during honors ceremonies.

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## About VSA arts of Michigan

**VSA arts of Michigan** promotes creative power in people with disabilities, and works to create a society where people with disabilities participate in, learn through, excel in and enjoy the arts. This mission is realized by developing and implementing educational programs and activities that increase knowledge, skill and awareness, by providing training and professional development for artists, educators, parents, arts, health and social services professionals, and by promoting access to art and culture throughout the state.

**VSA arts of Michigan** is a member of the international network of VSA arts, an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. VSA arts was founded in 1974 by Jean Kennedy Smith. Millions of people in over 60 countries throughout the world participate in VSA arts programs each year.

**VSA arts of Michigan** receives funding annually to support its programs and services from VSA arts through an award from the U.S. Department of Education, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts, and through contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals

**VSA arts of Michigan** employment opportunities, programs and services are provided equally without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, age, height, weight, veteran status, marital status, non-disqualifying disability, sexual orientation or other characteristics protected by law.

**EXPRESSIONS** is available upon request in **Large Print** and **Cassette** editions. Contact VSA arts of Michigan, P.O. Box 02805, Detroit, MI 48202, call 313/ 832-3303, or e-mail [info@vsami.org](mailto:info@vsami.org)

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## Young Soloist of the Year

*con't. from page 1*

Although she is blind, Ebony was determined to learn the keyboard, and accompany herself. Stevie Wonder has been a big influence in her life. "He plays so gracefully," she says. She now regularly plays and sings for audiences including her classmates, her school, Carter Middle School, and Grace Immanuel Church. She has performed at the Capital Rotunda in Lansing, the IMA Auditorium at the University of Michigan-Flint, and the Clio Amphitheater.

Ebony Grundy was selected as VSA arts of Michigan's Young Soloist 2007 by two excellent Michigan Artists: jazz artist Bess Bonnier and Karen DiChiera who directs community programs for Michigan Opera Theater. The judges' comments include . . . "an extremely gifted young woman . . . her rhythm, tone, phrasing, and breath control are excellent" . . . and . . . "Ebony deserves to have consistent and rigorous vocal training. There is another voice in Ebony, once can just begin to hear it now. It can be brought out by a good teacher and Ebony will discover there are even more things she can sing."

As VSAMI's Young Soloist for 2007, Ebony was nominated to the national VSA arts competition for Young Soloist of the Year.

## Educator of the Year

*con't. from page 1*

In addition, all Mrs. Shelton-Mitchell's students have participated in academic games at local and state levels, participated in public performances at school and with VSA arts of MI, and worked in VSAMI's summer employment program.

Mrs. Shelton-Mitchell has proven to the students, parents, fellow teachers and administrators that these students can learn and be successful if given the opportunity. She has created an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding.

Mrs. Shelton-Mitchell was nominated by Mrs. Arlene Towns, mother of Marlon Towns of the VSAMI Detroit artsJAM program. In her nomination letter, Mrs. Town wrote: "Mrs. Mitchell's introduction of the students to the VSA arts of Michigan program and her advocacy for their attendance has been a pure blessing. It has allowed Marlon to expound on his independence, creativity, social interaction and enhancement of a love of the arts. She is a unique educator and a wonderful human being"

Mrs. Mitchell continues to educate herself and others in the area of autism, continuing her formal education at Wayne State University and following current literature, to better serve her students and others with disabilities.

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### VSA arts and Metlife Foundation Announce Grant to Michigan Opera Theater

Michigan Opera Theater is one of ten organizations across the country to receive an *Arts Connect All* grant of up to \$15,000 for their work in creating inclusive learning environments that engage students of all abilities. The Detroit based program, "Create Opera!," will bring together area high school students to write and perform an original opera. Other grant awardees include CENTERSTAGE in Baltimore; Deaf West Theatre in North Hollywood and AXIS Dance Company in Oakland, California; STAGES in St. Louis, Missouri; and Oregon Cultural Access in Portland.

## District News

**artsJAM Copper County** was launched in the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan's Upper Peninsula this January. This popular VSAMI artist residency program has been adopted by the Copper County District working in partnership between the Vocational Strategies Inc. and several exceptional Michigan artists. Funding is provided by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and VSA arts.

Vocational Strategies, Incorporated (VSI) has been providing training for adults with mental and physical disabilities since 1970. The agency focuses on developing individual vocational skills, providing supported employment opportunities, and ensuring community-based job integration. Administrators and staff understand and support including hands-on arts activities to develop individual expression and creative abilities.

Web site: [www.vocstrat.org/](http://www.vocstrat.org/)

VSAMI Copper County District Program Coordinator, Susan Burack, has recruited three talented visual artists from the area to work with participants from Vocation Strategies Inc. Leading off the program is clay and copper artist Ed Gray, Native American name, Jikiwe. The six week course in pottery is being conducted at the Vertin Gallery, an artist studio and gallery



founded by Gray, and operating in a renovated department store in downtown Calumet.

Web site: [www.vertingallery.com/](http://www.vertingallery.com/)

Each workshop session begins and ends with a circle gathering. Ed Gray uses a talking stick, whoever is holding the talking stick has the right to speak and everyone else listens. As Ed explains, "The Native American culture relied on this form as a way of teaching, sharing, gathering and I continue to use this for our circle time." The pottery workshops, titled Fun with Clay, are being documented in photographs that are posted in the artist studio -- and some shown here --- that track the progress of everyone's work. Following are excerpts from Ed Gray's journal of the residency.

### Day 3

*All the people in the gathering are making great strides and today everyone gave it his all. The key is to work with each person and find the tools that work. ... It is rewarding and exciting to see how egos are boosted and confidence builds with the completion of each task.*



### Day 4

*We have completed our beads, free form tile and large life spiral story. The tools learned up to now have been: ways to use clay, ways to carve images, the use of various textures, sanding and cleaning surfaces and applying a fine slip for polishing the pieces. Also the skills of listening, watching and sharing are reinforced.*

*The next four classes will be working in tiles. During this time, we will be working on a group tile mosaic to be placed at their building.*

*A collaborative decision will be made in regards to the drawing and the message conveyed. This group piece will then flow into individual tile making. Working on this large piece as a group will convey to each that we all need to support each other and we are all part of a larger circle.*

#### Day 7

*The cold weather has not frozen our enthusiasm however considering the outdoors, we feel as though we are in the midst of a remake of Dr. Zhivago in his horse drawn cutter in frozen Russia. At our next gathering, on Thursday, we plan to do some outdoor firing in the snow banks at the VSI but we will be at the mercy of the weather. If the sub-zero weather continues, we will reschedule for a warmer day.*

#### Day 10

*Melissa shared with me that today that at lunch Jesse asked if we were going to Ed Gray Studio today. When she replied "Yes", he broke into "Joy to the World". This small gesture on Jesse's part brings to light a bigger picture. The open door policy where everybody is equal and participates within a circle has a tendency to wash away all differences. So, teaching mixed with laughter and sharing turns into an incredible tool to reach all participants.*



*(In the last two sessions) we will be working at VSI to continue finishing up the pieces and setting the tiles for the VSI building. The finished product will be titled "Our Place".*

Two more six-week workshops sessions are planned for the first ArtsJAM Copper County program. Fiber artist, Jane Van Evera, will teach textile and fiber art during March and April in her studio. Photographer Carol Rose will lead participants in an exploration of local places and culture through the camera lens in June.

## More District News

**VSAMI Metro Detroit** is replicating the artsJAM Detroit program model at **Osborn High School**. This effort is supported by a grant from the Skillman Foundation's Great Neighborhood Initiative, which provides full-scale support to six city neighborhoods including Osborn. More than 65,000 children live in the six targeted neighborhoods, which make up about 30% of the child population in Detroit. Fifty percent of the children in these neighborhoods live in poverty. VSAMI Coordinator, Linda Boston, is working with educators to provide after school programs with professional artists in performing and visual arts for young people in the Osborn Neighborhood. Osborn High School has the largest special education student enrollment in the Detroit Public Schools.

**Genesee County District** has launched their new website. It looks great. Check it out at: <http://www.vsami-genesee.org/>

**New VSAMI Districts** have organized local committees and are planning VSAMI programs in their home communities of **Marquette** and **Berrien County**. In **Sault Ste. Marie**, interested educators, artists, and parents are meeting to discuss launching a local VSAMI district program.

In **Mt. Pleasant**, **VSAMI Starry Night** has received funding from the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation to host a summer camp for young people with autism, in partnership with the Central Michigan University Department of Music.

**artJAM Flint** has received two grants totaling \$34,000 from the Ruth Mott Fund, to bring teens to the Greater Flint Arts Council and Red Inkl Studio for after school artists workshops; and to collaborate with the Flint Community Schools Bridges to the Future Program to engage youth in the arts at Flint Central Foundation Academy and Southwestern Academy Annex.

## From the Executive Director's Desk

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Skillman Foundation for supporting the replication of our *artsJAM Gallery & Studio* program at Osborn High School. We are extremely please to be able to serve students at Osborn, and are thankful to Mr. Dixon, Osborn's principal, Mr. Bolden, the after-school program coordinator from Communities in School, and special educator Stephanie Radcliff, for welcoming us and facilitating the initiation of the program.

The change in focus does present us with a challenge, however. Now we need to find the necessary funding to continue our *artsJAM Work Alternatives for Youth* program in which we have employed 20-25 youth at minimum wage over periods of 3-9 weeks during the summer. We teach employability skills through the arts, focusing on developing a work ethic, learning about proper behavior, dress, language, and showing respect for fellow employees and the workplace.

In addition to acquiring skills in a variety of arts disciplines, the youth are mentored by professional artists, and are encouraged to think about career options. We are not just talking about the actor or dancer on stage, the musician in concert, or the visual artist whose work is on exhibit, but all of the behind-the-scenes activities, such as lighting and sound technology, costume, prop and scene design, and matting and framing of paintings, drawings, and photography – all the things that go into presenting the arts professionally.



We would be extremely grateful if you would clip the coupon below, and make a donation to this worthwhile program, so that we can engage our youth in learning these valuable work/life skills, and give them meaningful summer employment.

Thank you for your consideration.

~ Lora Frankel

**Friends make the difference!** Your donation will:

- put clay, or paint, or a drum into the hands of a young person with autism
- bring adults with physical disabilities together for music and movement
- help artists with disabilities successfully share their artwork with new audiences

VSA arts of Michigan is reaching into communities across the state, in partnership with schools, community arts groups, and social service agencies. Please join us and show your support with a donation today.

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Major Benefactor .....	(\$2,500 - \$9,999)
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**Your Help  
is Needed!**

*Please, be a  
Friend to  
VSA arts of Michigan*

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VSA arts of Michigan \* P.O. Box 02805, 100 W. Alexandrine \* Detroit, MI 48202-2805

# Thank you, Friends

VSA arts of Michigan extends a sincere thank you to the following persons, organizations and agencies who have given so generously since September 2006. This support is essential to the growth and sustainability of our programming and services throughout the state.

## **Sustainers \$10,000 and more**

Michigan Council for Arts and  
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The Skillman Foundation  
VSA arts/John F. Kennedy Center

*For Genesee County*  
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*For Traverse City, con't.*

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## ***In Memory of Margaret Strasser***

Robert W. Curtis

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Eileen Hyman and Arnie  
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Michael and Susan Jacob  
Bobbie Miller  
Alan and Ida Nathan  
Leslie M. Perlman  
Dale and Jerry Rubin

## Special Events

- March 1** Michigan Council for Exceptional Children conference, Grand Rapids, with GR Arts and Mentoring presentation
- March 16 & 19** VSA artists workshops at Marion Crouse Instructional Center, Flushing
- March 23-24** VSAMI Board Retreat
- March 29** artsJAM Detroit Share and Show
- April 5** Elmer Knopf Learning Center Festival, Flint
- April 17-18** Eastern UPISD Transition Fair, Sault Ste. Marie
- May 4** Grand Rapids Festival
- May 7-8** St. Joseph County Festival, Glen Oaks Community College, Centreville
- May 15** Genesee County Festival
- May 17** Charlevoix-Emmet Transition Festival, North Central Michigan College, Petoskey; and Big and Little Show Artist Reception, Grand Rapids
- May 18** VSA artists workshop at Genesee Early Childhood
- May 22** VSAMI Capital Day in Lansing
- May 23** Grand Rapids Very Special Event fundraiser at Watermark Country Club

*(con't next column)*

- June 7** artsJAM Detroit Share and Show
- June 9** Genesee County Bench Auction & Gala
- June 11-21** Starry Night camp, Mt. Pleasant
- July 11** Grand Traverse Area at National Cherry Festival

### **Incite Art 2007 - VSAMI Emerging Artists Touring Exhibit Schedule**

- March 5-7** Michigan Transition Services Association conference, Frankenmuth
- April 1-30** Washtenaw County Intermediate School District, Ann Arbor
- May 10-12** Michigan Youth Arts Festival, WMU, Kalamazoo
- May 22** VSAMI Capital Day, State Capital Rotunda, Lansing
- June 1-30** Community Arts Center, Youth Gallery, Hancock
- August 20-September 7** Genesee County Intermediate School District, Flint
- September 10-October 10** VSAMI Dearborn w/Dearborn Community Arts Council, Dearborn Public Library Rotunda
- October 10-14** Michigan Arts Education Assoc. conference, Amway Hotel, Grand Rapids
- October 24 – 26** Michigan Rehab conference, Amway Hotel, Grand Rapids
- November 1 – 23** Southwest Michigan College, Dowagiac



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