

**NEW JERSEY**

# NJ awards Matheny \$72K for its people with disabilities arts program

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The New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA) awarded Matheny – a Somerset County-based hospital and school for people with developmental disabilities – \$72,732 for its arts program, according to Matheny.

Arts Access, located in Peapack, is in its 13th year of making art, including music, theater, poetry, painting and more accessible to people who often have “complex” medical needs and limited mobility.

Founded by the Matheny family who wanted better for their son, it also trains health care professionals, educators, and offers a variety of services to people with disabilities such as life skills training, therapy and wheelchair repair. Its participants come from across the state.

“We know that every dollar invested in the arts produces a significant return in measurable and immeasurable ways,” says Rachelle Rivera of the NJSCA. “This grant will help Matheny continue to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to express themselves through fine art.”

In a statement Matheny said its multidisciplinary program, which is designed to help people find ways to communicate through art, is a way for its clients to “define themselves by their accomplishments.”

The program features professional artists, who are referred to as “facilitators” there to help inspire participants and lend a hand when it’s needed to work around disabilities. As a result, people “across the full spectrum of disability” are able to communicate clearly and see the fruits of their creativity, according to the program’s website. The goal is to help participants build self-confidence in addition to developing artistic skills.

Meanwhile the acrylic paintings, digital art, choreography and essays produced break down barriers by showing the abilities of people with disabilities.

“The support Matheny receives from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts makes it possible for us to continue providing the artists with disabilities the opportunity to do what they love – creatively express themselves through art,” said Eileen Murray, director of the program. “We are grateful to Gov. Murphy, and all of our state representatives for their support of the NJSCA and its remarkable work throughout New Jersey.”

The grant award will support Arts Access’ general operating costs and assist with its pandemic recovery efforts, according to the statement. Since 1999, the NJSCA has awarded nearly \$750,000 to Matheny’s arts program.

The work of the Arts Access artists will be on display at its fine arts showcase, Full Circle: Reemergence, on Nov. 4 at the Robert Schonhorn Arts Center in Peapack. A variety of artwork, including paintings, sculptures, photographs and more will be on display.

