

THE Open Door

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GAMING UNLOCKED PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

By Rachel Thielen
YOUTH SERVICES SPECIALIST

Access to Independence is excited to announce the launch of its new Gaming Unlocked program, beginning in January. Gaming Unlocked will combat social isolation through accessible and inclusive gaming, and give people with a variety of disabilities access to gaming through adaptive technologies.

SEE GAMING, PAGE 6



Artists Beyond
Boundaries
a success
Page 2



Assistive
Technology
Highlight
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Connecting with the
local deaf and hard of
hearing communities
Page 5



LARGEST EVER ARTISTS BEYOND BOUNDARIES A SUCCESS!

By Amber Brunes

PROGRAMS AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT

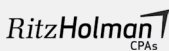
We were thrilled to have received the largest number of entries to our Artists Beyond Boundaries event to date! The fifth annual event boasted 76 works of art from 50 different artists with disabilities living in Wisconsin.

On October 6th we premiered a virtual event which showcased each and every work of art submitted to the event, highlighted a few words from this year's jurors, and announced the year's Top Twelve works of art.

We are so thankful to everyone who helped make this year's Artists Beyond Boundaries event such a success. From the huge outpouring of talent and creativity of the artists, the time and energy spent by jurors with the difficult task of helping us choose this year's finalists, to the generosity of our sponsors, thank you for making this event possible. And last, but not least, we want to thank the viewers! Your support of this event through your views online, or your financial gifts are what support the growth of this event, and our agency.

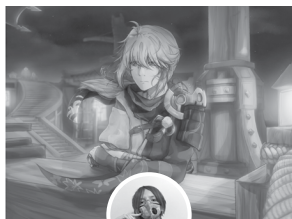
Stay up to date on Artists Beyond Boundaries and our other agency events by following us on Facebook!

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

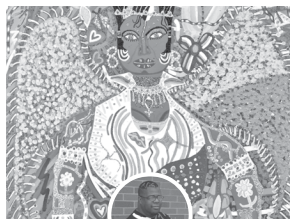




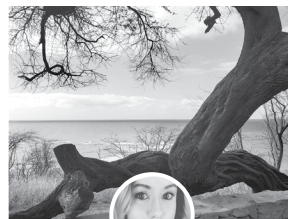
CONGRATULATION FINALISTS



Sarah Helmber
Di-Visions



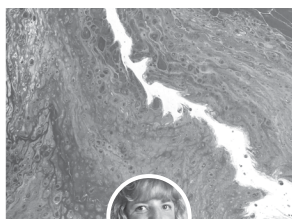
Romano Johnson
The Book of Cross
Mother Angel-Mother
Blue Cloud Water ANgle



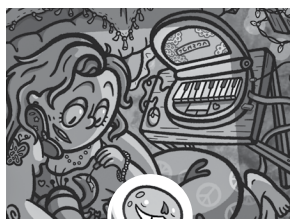
Nicole Johnson
Nature's Frame (Hawaii)



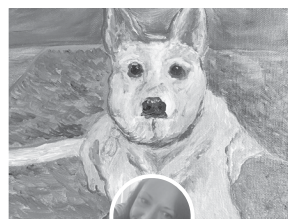
Lori Kinnard
Who, Me?



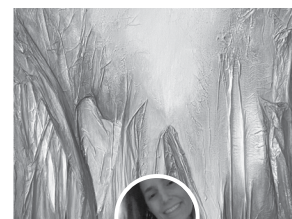
Kati Hiley
The Ocean is Calling



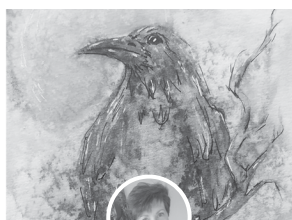
Aeryn Streiffer
Surf's Up



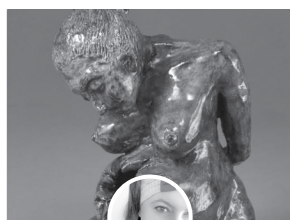
Jesika Bornsen
Luna



Jen King
Enchanted Woods



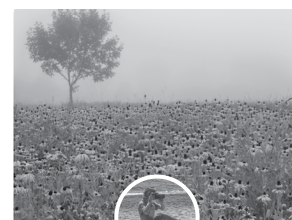
Jen James
Raven



Heather Waller
Loss



Chloe Hougan
My Soul at Peace



Bobbi Hague
The Stillness of Morning



Keira Thompson
Under the Sea

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ARTISTSBYONDBOUNDARIES.WEEBLY.COM

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY HIGHLIGHT

HomeAware Blink is first of its kind

A new alert for the HomeAware system is the HomeAware Blink, the first of its kind to use various colored lights to alert you to up to five specific home events! It connects to the HomeAware Main Unit, transmitters, and receivers, and blinks five unique colors when used with optional transmitters. Depending on what transmitter or receiver is triggered: the Blink flashes green for your doorbell, dark blue for a baby crying, orange for the phone ringing, and red for smoke/carbon monoxide detector. A light blue flash provides a universal alert for everyday sounds, such as an intercom, kitchen timer, the garage door opening, a dog barking - just to name a few. The Blink can be as far away as 400 feet from the HomeAware Main Unit. Have the Main Unit in your bedroom and the Blink in your living room, so you never miss an alert.

Contact us to learn more about this device or our many other assistive technology devices available for demonstration and loan!



YouTube Channel

Have you checked out the Access to Independence YouTube channel? We've recently started adding informational videos about some of the many different services, programs, and assistive technology here at Access to Independence! Find us at bit.ly/AccessToIndYouTube to tune in!

Connecting with the local deaf and hard of hearing communities

By Tracy Miller

INDEPENDENT LIVING SPECIALIST

October was a busy month! I attended the annual conference of Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Wisconsin. I learned so much from some great presenters, about the variety of life experiences of people living

with hearing loss, and the resources available to help and support them. Special thanks to Jerry Lapidakis and Jack Spear from the Madison HLAA Chapter, who made me feel so welcome.

Less than a week later, I visited the “Deaf Coffee Chat” at the Madison Area Association of the Deaf clubhouse in Madison. Many thanks to Alice Sykora for

inviting me to share information about Access, and to all those who shared their thoughts with me about community needs and interests. I am really excited about planning some new classes in the coming year, based on what people have shared with me. More to come about that soon!

SEE HLAA, PAGE 6

Below: HEAR Wisconsin President and CEO Jill VanCalster and Wisconsin HLAA President Jim Rau at the Wisconsin HLAA Conference.



GAMING

FROM PAGE 1

The first phase of Gaming Unlocked to roll out will be adaptive gaming groups for Dane County youth receiving services from the Children's Long Term Support (CLTS) program. The new groups will include games on the Xbox One consoles and each session will have built-in peer support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all the importance of participating in leisure activities and how social

isolation impacts our overall health. Gaming Unlocked ensures individuals with disabilities can have the same access and opportunities to engage in leisure activities, build healthy relationships with peers, and gain positive experiences through the gaming community.

The launch of Gaming Unlocked was made possible from the generous support of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, which supported the purchase of gaming consoles, monitors, controllers, and other equipment for several players

at one time. Additionally, with generous support from AbleGamers, Access to Independence has acquired many pieces of accessible gaming equipment that will be available for loan, demonstration, and training in a 1:1 setting, as well as use in gaming groups. The new equipment allows participants to interact with video games using the Xbox Adaptive Controller, joysticks, switches, and a creative use of mounts. Access to Independence will work with participants to find a setup that works with what abilities they have.



STAY CONNECTED through future newsletters, and social media, as we announce more opportunities through our Gaming Unlocked program. If you have any questions, please email Rachel Thielen, rachel.t@accesstoind.org or call at (608) 716-7109.



COMMUNITIES

FROM PAGE 5

Did you know that the FDA recently approved the sale of over the counter (OTC) hearing aids? This move was meant to make hearing aids more affordable for people with mild to moderate hearing loss. HLAA Wisconsin has a tip sheet on their web page, with information to think about if you

are considering purchasing an OTC hearing aid. Visit us online at www.hlaawi.org for more information.

Do you have news and information about happenings in the Hard of Hearing or Deaf communities that you would like to share with Access? Want to help us plan future classes and activities? Keep in touch with me at tracym@accesstoind.org.



Above: DHH Teacher Katherine Rybek presents on "Becoming Hearing Empowered" at the Wisconsin HLAA Conference.



WISLOAN + TELEWORK LOAN PROGRAMS

FUNDING INDEPENDENCE

WisLoan and Telework are alternative loan programs that assist Wisconsin residents with disabilities to acquire technologies to become self-employed or to work from home. These loan programs are different from traditional bank loans because a bank doesn't make the final decision, the WisLoan and Telework Board does. That allows flexibility for people who have an item they need to maintain their independence, but have trouble coming up with the money all at once or finding other ways to pay for what they need. Simply contact Access to Independence for information at (608) 242-8484 or email info@accesstoind.org.

WISLOAN

What Can I Buy with a WisLoan?

You can purchase technology such as wheelchairs, computers, ramps, vehicle modifications, or home modifications.

TELEWORK

What Can I Buy with a TeleWork Loan?

You can purchase items such as computers and software, scanners or fax machines, tools, office furniture, or modifications for an accessible office.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

How much can I borrow?

Loan amounts range from \$250 to \$50,000. The loan would be for the exact amount of the item.

Can I apply if I have no job?

Yes. Social Security Disability or Retirement benefits and other sources of income are considered.

Can I apply if my credit is poor?

Yes. The reason for the poor credit is considered, as is one's ability to repay the loan.

How do I apply?

Contact Access to complete the loan application materials in person. Application can be done at the Access office or at a location of your preference.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & SPONSORS

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Access to Independence greatly appreciates the generosity of all those who have made a financial contribution – big or small – to our organization. Through the generosity of our donors, ACCESS is able to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to access demonstrations and free loans of assistive technology equipment, skills training in peoples' homes and classes at our office in Madison, among the wide array of services we provide. We would like to thank each of our sponsors for their generosity!

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Access to Independence

3810 Milwaukee Street
Madison, WI 53714

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Access to Independence

3810 Milwaukee Street
Madison, WI 53714

608.242.8484 (phone/relay)
800.362.9877 (toll-free/relay)
608.242.0383 (fax)

info@accesstoind.org
www.accesstoind.org

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Access is seeking new board members.
Contact us if you'd like to know more.

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WISLOAN + TELEWORK
ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE



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