



CAA 2020 News

**We are Different.
We are Able.**

Mission

CAA provides an equitable collegiate experience to adults with special needs who historically have not had access to college education.

Vision

Empowering the student body to creatively transform the way the world views individuals with disabilities. CAA creates successful contributing citizens through the arts.

Motto

Showcase Ability!

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CAA student Johnny is proud to begin learning at CAA's new home at West Valley College

History in the making: CAA West Valley community partnership

In July of 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic the West Valley Mission Community College District held their July board of Trustees meeting online, and that evening voted unanimously to bring College of Adaptive Arts onto their campus to allow adults to learn who historically haven't had access to higher education. Simultaneously, the agreement established a model whereby CAA we be a work-study, leadership-training, and living learning lab for West Valley College students and staff.

The Swenson Development under the visionary civic leadership of Case Swenson stepped up to build out an accessible bathroom within CAA's new space. A community observation deck is also being constructed and underwritten in part by the Rotary Club of the San Jose Foundation. CAA is forever grateful to Case Swenson and his incredible staff Eric Grimley and Cris Zepeda. Eric has been an exceptionally kind and receptive lead, and Cris' personal remodeling company of C&E Remodeling stepped up to upgrade the accessible bathroom with all touchless equipment.

More good news came when College of Adaptive Arts was selected as a 2020 San Jose Mercury News Wishbook Feature Charity. The Wishbook will feature the compelling story of CAA student & Associate Professor Bernard Smith and his family. Proceeds will go toward the West Valley campus transition projects such as COVID-19 safety protocols and securing an electric drive-about.

College of Adaptive Arts this Fall Quarter enrolled its highest number ever of student enrollment at 135 adult learners, ages 18 to 73, hungry and eager

to continue learning, growing, and contributing. The San Andreas regional center paved the path four years ago by approving College of Adaptive Arts as a vendor and soon afterward the Regional Center East Bay accepted CAA as a certified vendor. This past fall three other Regional Centers across the state have extended courtesy vendorization for CAA's online collegiate model of lifelong education delivered in an adaptive and accessible way.

CAA achieved Guidestar's national Platinum Seal of Transparency and Great Nonprofits Top-Rated 2020 Nonprofit badge with over 50 reviews of 5-star. The vision is that one day this lifelong higher educational model will be as widespread and accessible for education that Special Olympics serves for sports. Momentum is gaining, and on behalf of the entire College of Adaptive Arts Mountain Movers Community, we extend to you a most heartfelt thanks for your belief and support of this innovative and transformative collegiate model.



CAA student Maria receives distance learning equipment

From the board

For the past four years, I have been privileged enough to be a board member for the College of Adaptive Arts. Over time I have seen tremendous growth and development in the many fabulous people who have joined the team to help grow this innovative model for adults who historically have not had access to education.

Over the years, I have served on the board task force to help bring in new corporate underwriters, I have also served as the Board Treasurer overseeing financials and bi-weekly payroll. I am amazed at how hard the CAA staff work for the students on such a tight budget. Every expense and strategic investment is discussed in an open and transparent manner; with the end prize being a place that will benefit the students and augment a professional atmosphere for the staff.

This past board retreat, I decided to join the task force focused on building relationships with the West Valley College leadership team to ensure that this budding partnership will be beneficial for all. We hope to show how this educational model can serve as a living learning lab, leadership training ground, and work-study experience for a host student studying for his or her associates & four-year accredited degrees. We hope to show how this hub can be a value to West Valley and all college campuses across the nation, and that when the focus shifts to providing an authentic college experience to adults who historically have not had access, everyone wins.



Sandee Raval Kiehl

Student highlight: Thomas Valdivia



Thomas Valdivia and Professor De

Thomas Valdivia has been a CAA college student for the past year. His diagnoses over the years have ranged from failure to thrive to intellectual impairment. However, if you ask Thomas he will say, "I'm a college student!"

Having the opportunity to attend CAA has broadened his interests and given him the opportunity to participate in a social setting with his peers. To his family's surprise, his favorite class is Fun with Famous Artists, in which they are planning virtual trips to

museums. His computer literacy has soared and is now beyond that of his parents as he has had to learn to do everything virtually during this COVID-19 shelter in place.

Thomas is very involved in his community, and in addition to weekly parks and rec classes in three different cities, he is an assistant coach for a girls high school volleyball team. He volunteers as an altar server at mass for his local parish, exercises at the YMCA, and plays golf once a week. He lives in his own apartment and is employed at Amazon. Thomas participated in a voting webinar about voting basics which was created in cooperation with the San Jose Public Library and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Thomas is truly a life long learner. He has attended and graduated from Foothill College TTW Program & Taft College TIL Program. CAA is another step in his pursuit for knowledge. Thomas is looking forward to the day he will be in classes on the new campus at West Valley College.

From the executive director: Pure gratitude

As I reflect back on the 11 years of College of Adaptive Arts' existence, my heart overflows with gratitude. I am grateful for Dr. Pamela Lindsay, as our worlds collided so many years back when CAA was no more than a vision in our collective minds. The synergy we have created based on trust, respect, and celebrating all successes has laid a solid foundational bedrock from which this innovative collegiate model has grown.

I am grateful to all of the parents and students who have found our college and who continue to find and grow with this equitable, lifelong collegiate model. I am truly in awe when I meet the parents with fire in their eyes and the conviction that they know that their adult child still has so much more to learn, grow, and flourish. They continuously support their child to push the boundaries of their full potential.

I am grateful to all of the professors, teachers, and staff who have found CAA over the years and have given astute input, ideas, and have put the best versions of themselves forward for the sake of their students. Their professionalism, teamwork, kindness, integrity, and high expectations are

second to none. I love to see the staff working together, supporting each other, exploring cross-departmental collaborations, and brainstorming together on how to bring out the bountiful abilities of their students.

I am grateful to CAA's Mountain Mover board members, and to the donors, community organizations, local businesses, and high tech corporations who support this College. We've got so far to go to turn this model into a viable and sustainable model which can be truly replicated, but when I look around at everyone in the community who has come out to help these adults, I know we're going to get there.

And last, I am grateful to my sister and to my family. My sister, Angel, has always been my constant source of love and inspiration and my guiding light. My family has supported me each step of the way and has made so many sacrifices for the sake of bringing this vision to fruition. The price has been steep, and they have rallied behind me always with grace and love. My heart is truly full of gratitude to you all.

Professor De - DeAnna Pursai :)

CAA takes events online

College of Adaptive Arts has figured out how to take its most popular events online these past eight months to feature some of its most successful events to date using the fully virtual Zoom Webinar platform.

Thanks to the visionary leadership and exquisite teamwork from Katie Zeisl, Director School of Theatre & Special Events, Michael Reisman, Director of Science and Technology & IT Support Lead, and Clarissa Thompson, Director of the School of TV/Film, and CAA Professor Hannah Thrasher, these four leaders worked tirelessly behind the scenes working with Amernet out of San Francisco to learn Zoom webinar to host the wildly successfully Musical Theatre and Graduate Theatre showcase productions in June and the 12th Annual Celebrating Abilities Film Festival this past November.

The CAA students' artistic expressions were showcased exquisitely through this online Zoom medium. By utilizing FilmFreeway this



CAA Students conducted a fab virtual film festival in November

year, the TV/Film department received over 700 submissions and were able to feature over 40 short films throughout the week-long Virtual Film Festival. These films are by, for, and about individuals with differing abilities. A heartfelt thanks as well goes to CAA School of Art Director Nicole Ferguson for her incredible work creating the programs, flyers, and collateral for these events. Go #CAASuperstaff Team Awesome!

Superstaff spotlight: Clarissa Thompson



Clarissa Thompson

“And the winner is....Clarissa Thompson!”

These words have become familiar to this talented filmmaker and Director of CAA's School of Television and Film. For example, Clarissa received the senior film achievement award from UC Santa Cruz before the ink on her diploma was dry. With such success, her options were plentiful. She chose a television/film/social media advocacy path focused on body-positivity, mental health awareness, and self-love. These efforts created a natural pathway to her current position with the college and seamlessly pivoting CAA's TV/Film curriculum to an online format. She works every day to teach our college students with all differing abilities about types of filmmaking, film production, and social media while exploring vlogging, podcasting, 'TikTok', and other platforms for positive self-expression. “The students are excited about

that,” explains Clarissa. “They're speaking their mind, and it's very cool.”

She adds that she is so grateful to have found this career path, so new to our community that she had never heard of it before discovering CAA. She is currently excited about developing our annual CAA “Celebrate Abilities” virtual film festival, this year's film-viewing platform 'Vimeo,' and the addition of the professional portal 'FilmFreeway' for short film submissions. She also loves contributing editing and other technical skills to CAA marketing and special events projects. We are all excited about this school of study to provide students with ever-increasing experiences with platforms to share their voices and training to deliver their messages to the community in increasingly impactful ways.

Fun facts about Clarissa: 1) she loves dogs, 2) she is a trained dog groomer, 3) she found CAA while pet-sitting Co-Founder and ED DeAnna Pursai's dogs, 4) our students make her feel the happiness of increased joy and purpose in her life. If there were an award for incredible heart, generosity of spirit, and tireless effort to build opportunities for our Cardinals, she would undoubtedly take one home! You can award Director Clarissa with your own special acknowledgment of fantastic work with our students by sending her a note of thanks at info@collegeofadaptivearts.org.

West Valley Site Transition Projects

- Painting
- Site Infrastructure Upgrades: Panels, hanging fixtures
- Electric drive-about vehicle for student transport
- Digital Display for Weekly Updates
- Additional water cooler units
- Walkie-talkies with expanded reception area
- New Dance Wall Mirrors
- COVID safety equipment
- Site Signage Underwriting

Corporate Volunteer Opportunities

- Wifi-build-out
- Painting projects – internal and exterior
- COVID safety equipment installation
- Fixture installations

Please contact board member Steve Fiss if interested in supporting: info@collegeofadaptivearts.org

2020 Quarter Dates

Winter Quarter:

Monday, Jan. 4 – Friday, March 19
Mid-Quarter Break (No CAA Classes):
Monday, Feb. 8 – Friday, Feb 12

Spring Quarter:

Monday, April 5 – Friday, June 18
Mid-Quarter Break (No CAA Classes):
Monday, May 10 - Fri May 14

Summer Quarter:

Monday, July 5 – Friday, Sept. 17
Mid-Quarter Break (No CAA Classes):
Monday, Aug 9 – Fri Aug 13

Fall Quarter:

Monday, October 4 – Tuesday, Dec. 21
Mid-Quarter Break/Thanksgiving Break
(No CAA Classes): Thurs, Nov. 18 –
Friday, Nov. 26, 2021



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CAA college students begin to enjoy their new school on the beautiful campus of West Valley College

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