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COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
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DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
July 11, 2011

Present: Cecile Brodsky, Dana Canevari, David Hicks, William Long, Jack Tsai
Margaret Andrews, Chair Bridgeport Disability Commission

Excused Absence: Jason Gomez, Matthew Ranelli, Elaine Quinn

Staff: Michelle Duprey, Paula Pernal

Meeting was called to order at 5:25pm.

Guest Speaker

Eileen Carpinella is the Executive Director of Young Audiences Arts for Learning Connecticut VSA. Young Audiences is an affiliate of VSA that is a national organization with about 30 affiliates nationwide that brings the arts to children, families & teachers. Young Audiences just celebrated 31 years in Connecticut. Young Audiences is just starting to expand toward the elderly. In 2007, they were asked to be the State-wide affiliate for VSA to bring the Arts to people. There was no affiliate for VSA in Connecticut before Young Audiences.

Young Audiences have focused in Connecticut on four different areas:

1. Education & Artistic Residency Programs-work with children on school environment & community environment & have artists conduct residencies state-wide
2. Professional Development & Technical Assistance in terms for universal design for learning and programs for artists & teachers as well as community partners
3. National VSA Initiatives such as national registries (soon to be one in CT), taken part in VSA CVS Caremark all kids can CREATE, Young Soloist Program at Kennedy Center, and art competitions such as VSA Volkswagen Smithsonian Exhibit (coming to New Haven in Sept).
4. International VSA Initiatives

VSA in Connecticut has received a Professional Development Award from the National VSA for its training that it provides to its artists who work with students in adult populations with disabilities.

In New Haven, the programs of Young Audiences can be found in schools, community centers and other sites such as Martinez & Celentano Schools. We have worked extensively with the New Haven Ballet on the shared-ability dance at the Shubert Theater. On September 9, 2011 the Sprout Film Festival at the Metropolitan Museum will show short films about people with disabilities at the Educational Center for the Arts on Audubon Street in New Haven. Prior to this, Young Audiences will show these short films to a local high school.

In the past, Young Audiences had three art exhibits: Hartford, Cornwall & Fairfield. All three sites were accessible within CT and very well attended. All three art exhibits were audio described with Braille copies and sign language interpreters.

The website is: www.ctvsa.org

Currently the website is under construction-will have an on-line gallery and calendar.

David asked if the artists in residency teach as well. Eileen explains that not all of the artists are required to have a disability but they are required to have training.

William asks if the schools in the State are aware of VSA. Eileen responds in the affirmative-Parents, teachers, PTO's are aware. General public is not aware of VSA. There are over 100 artists; not all from CT some come from far away as Seattle, WA. They also have dance groups from NY, NY.

Michelle mentions about the art exhibits in City Hall. Eileen stated that she will keep City Hall in mind.

Margaret Andrews, Chair of Bridgeport Disability Commission stated that she had not heard term "UDL" or Universal Design for Learning. Eileen states that you can download information on VSA website about this. It is about the artists or teachers taking the lessons and redefining how they are going to deliver them so that they are able to reach all learners at the same time and all students can take part in that activity.

David asked if VSA could partner with this Commission to assist with creating a small film series on disability issues throughout the year. David asked for suggestions. Eileen mentioned the possibility that VSA could partner with this Commission for funding and location.

David mentioned that Dana has been trying to get an inspiring production from New York called, "Diagnosis of a Fawn" to come to CT but there has been scheduling issues. Eileen will suggest that this production should be made a part of the International Festival of Arts in New Haven.

Dana also mentioned a play called "The Cripple of Inishmaan" at the International Festival of Arts & Festival. Dana mentioned that this was a tragic, dark play. She was really upset. It bothered her that no commissioners were present. Dana discusses about the derogatory use of the word crippled and the main character "Crippled Billy". Dana states that she was insulted and hated the play.

David suggests to Dana to start a disability blog.

Michelle suggests that Dana & VSA meet with the International Festival of Arts & Ideas to discuss future disability productions & sensitivity.

June Minutes

June minutes were reviewed.

David requested a modification to the May minutes under the "Chairman's Report" section. David requests language: "David has been working on disability issues that are affected by bills before the State legislature and the Federal government."

David made a motion to amend the May minutes.

Dana seconded the motion.

June minutes approved with modification unanimously.

Chairman's Report

David states that it has been a quiet time for legislature with regular business.

David introduces Margaret Andrews, Chair of the Bridgeport Disability Commission-newly revitalized since 1983. Margaret states that Bridgeport Commission is in the beginning stages. Margaret states that she is not the official Chair yet. The members have been chosen and vetted. Margaret mentions that Bridgeport let go their ADA Coordinator. She thinks that the City of Bridgeport will be resistant since they have not responded to requests for copies of the evaluations and transition plan.

Department Report

Michelle discusses the taxi issue-waiting for decision from State of CT for approval of permits for additional taxis. Michelle states that the transcripts are not complete. She thinks that Metro Taxi is going to ask to file their briefs without the transcripts because of the grant. Michelle states that vehicles must be on the road by 1/31/12.

Michelle goes through the governor's state budget cuts. All the cuts will have devastating effects on persons with disabilities. Michelle will send out copies to everyone. David asks how long do we have for anyone to be listening. The most direct way to do anything is to contact the Governor's office & the General Assembly.

Old Business

Dana will contact Eileen Carpinella in order to convince the New Festival of Arts & Ideas to include the play, "Diagnosis of a Fawn". Michelle suggests using the website.

New Business

Michelle asked that all members review the proposed Schedule for 2012. A discussion and vote shall take place at the September meeting.

Other Business

None

Public Comment

None

Dana made motion to adjourn meeting.

David seconded motion.

Motion to adjourn approved unanimously at 6:47 p.m.