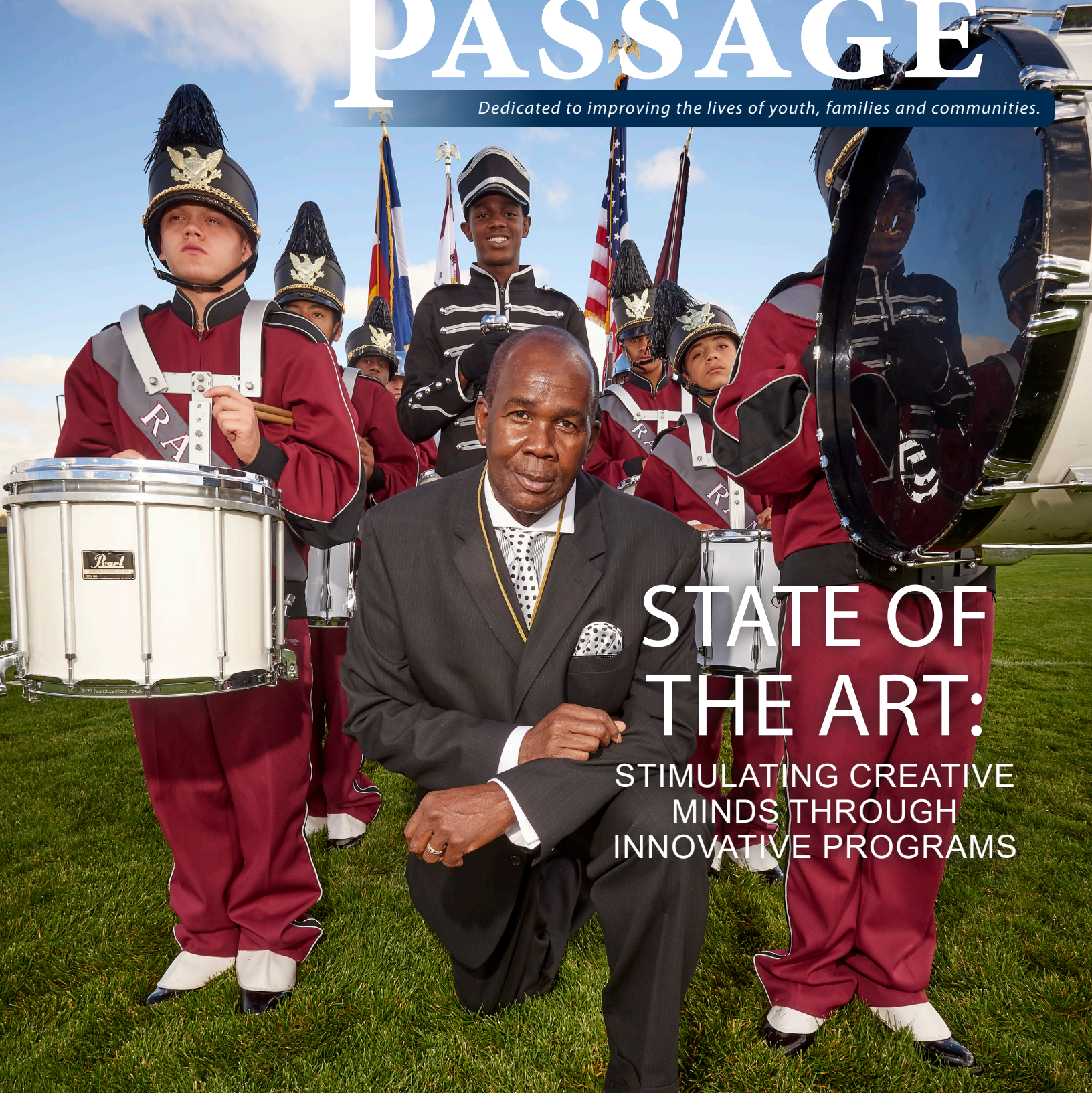


RITE OF PASSAGE

Dedicated to improving the lives of youth, families and communities.



STATE OF THE ART:

STIMULATING CREATIVE
MINDS THROUGH
INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Welcome Letter

Creating a culture of collaboration and creativity through programs that combine art and education.

Positive Youth Justice

Dr. Jeffrey Butts explains the role of creative expression in a Positive Youth Justice approach.

Music Meets Community

For over 17 years, Mr. Willie Peacock has changed lives through music and marching.



W E L C O M E



In recognition of Art in Education, I am honored to dedicate this year's magazine to the educators, staff, community partners, and the young men and women who are enrolled in our 42 programs.

Rite of Passage (ROP) programs awaken our students' cultural awareness and knowledge about the arts, and prepare them to become future cultural consumers. Exposure to the arts also affects our students' values through implicit lessons in tolerance, diversity and empathy. This awareness of different people, places and ideas boosts critical thinking through experiences, which promote self-reflection,

thoughtfulness and intellectual play as they observe representations of our complicated world.

ROP programs offer students opportunities to explore the arts across various forms. From visual art such as paintings and drawings, to music and dance, to more technological approaches that use digital tools, students explore various media of expression.

Notable for her use of textiles as a sculptural medium, sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz suggests that "Art does not solve problems, but makes us aware of their existence." Art Education, on the other hand, does solve problems. Years of research shows that the arts are closely linked to almost everything that we, as a nation, say we want for our children and demand from our schools: academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity.

Art—when paired with an accredited, quality education—prepares our students for the demands of the 21st Century with methods to become enrolled, enlisted or employed. It insists on the rigor of problem-solving and innovation, while promoting the exploration of ideas of hope and optimism... through a creative lens.

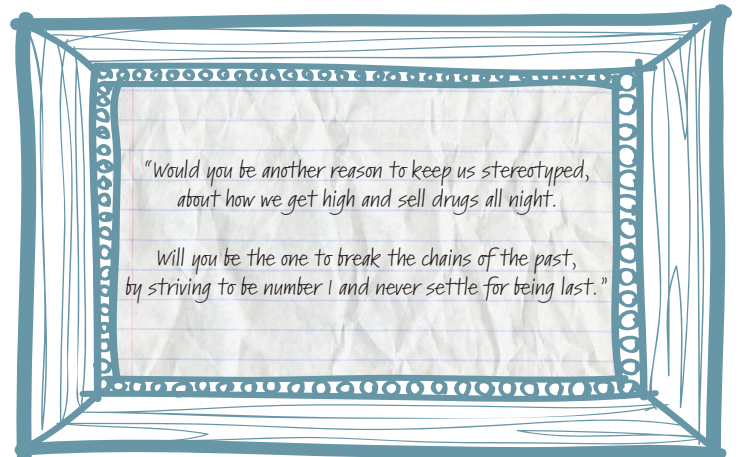
Tracy Bennett Joseph
Director of Education



Under the leadership of Band Director Willie Peacock, Ridge View Academy students continue a 17-year tradition of music and marching.



Sierra Ridge Academy graphic design students showcased their talents by creating custom-designed t-shirts for visiting board members.



A student from the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center commented on the social barriers created through stereotypes in his poem submission for the AR Governor-sponsored poetry contest.



Student-Athlete Dixon found his passion for the arts while participating in an art course at Hillcrest Academy. Mr. Dixon plans to continue his craft in college, and has applied to several art schools.



Rite Track students use art as a form of expressive therapy. For one project, students paired up to create decorative masks for a community art exposition.



ENHANCING EDUCATION THROUGH

ART

Involvement in Art Education is associated with gains in mathematics, reading, critical thinking and empathy. Rite of Passage prepares its students for the 21st century through experiences that require them to “think outside the box.”

El Centro Youth Create Church Mural Using the Power of Imagination

The youth of El Centro’s Evening Learning Center and Mentoring and Tracking program are giving back to the community through art. The hallways of El Centro’s First Baptist Church have a new—and unexpected—upgrade: they all feature underwater scenes painted (freehand) by the at-risk youth in these programs.

First Baptist Church Pastor, Tommy Rogers, asked the El Centro youth to assist in his idea for a mural project in the church after attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the treatment room at the Evening Learning Center. Student artwork—called “iconic puzzle pieces”—decorated the treatment room walls. Pastor Rogers was so impressed with the quality of the work that he invited youth from the Evening Learning Center to paint murals in the hallways of the church.

The “Under the Sea” mural has been an on-going project for nearly three months. Other community entities have stepped in to provide lunch and other supplies to the youth who, through the power of their imaginations, are transforming the halls of the First Baptist Church into an underwater world.

The Qualifying Houses Celebrate Nevada as the “State of the Art” in the Nevada Day Parade

As the State of Nevada honored its vibrant culture of Arts and Entertainment for this year’s Nevada Day parade, the Rite of Passage Nevada and California Qualifying Houses honored—and resurrected—a near 20-year legacy of their participation in the parade.

With Nevada’s celebration of its own statehood as one of the largest in the country, Rite of Passage re-ignited its participa-

tion in the event with a student-and-staff made float that paid tribute to the diverse artistic accomplishments in the State of Nevada while reminding viewers that expressive art can have a profound and positive effect on the artists themselves.

Thousands of event participants watched as the giant music scale featuring Nevada's state song, giant paint palettes and paint brushes and a giant collage of art created by Nevada artists cruised down the main street of the state capital, reminding parade-goers that creative expression resides at the heart of Positive Youth Development—one of the ways Rite of Passage achieves our mission of improving the lives of youth, families and communities.

Breaking Down Barriers Through Art: Dramatic Art Impacts Arkansas Youth

The Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center (AJATC) is using an unusual intervention to kick-start students' academic success and recovery: art. Through an after school program that launched this fall, eligible students can participate in a program focused on the dramatic arts.

"These kids are remarkable, and the art accentuates that," said AJATC Principal, Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield.

AJATC hosts a total of nine after school clubs, and the drama club, led by Dr. Wall-Whitfield, challenges students to produce monologues and two-person plays. Wall-Whitfield, who taught drama for ten years prior to becoming an administrator, uses brainstorming sessions and constructive criticism to help students get to the heart of their stories.

Wall-Whitfield sees the benefits of creative programming as two-fold: "Art allows students to get their feelings out into the world. Instead of cutting herself, a girl can turn on music and dance. Or, instead of beating someone up, a young man can memorize lines to a monologue that captures his anger and the reasons behind it."

The other reason, she says, is more important: "So many of our students are behind in school. They struggle in math class. Then, they struggle in English. In these classes, they work so hard to simply understand. But, in theater it's about what is inside of you. You help them through the lines, then they memorize them. On the stage, they can take ownership of their hard work and accomplish something. But then, that pride and self-confidence is translated back into the classroom."



It's Not About the ART; It's About the ARTIST

By: Dr. Jeffrey Butts

Several years ago, my colleagues and I articulated a different approach for youth justice. Rather than focusing interventions on what is going wrong in a young person's life, we proposed a Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) model that would build on what is going *right*. Drawing on the still-growing body of scientific knowledge about adolescent development and the rich practice principles of positive youth development, we proposed PYJ as a different way to think about youth behavior and how social service agencies should be working with justice-involved young people.

We designed the PYJ model as a framework for intervention strategies. The model encourages justice agencies and their partners to focus on protective factors as well as risk factors, strengths as well as problems, and positive outcomes rather than negative outcomes. A PYJ approach should facilitate each young person's transition to adulthood by focusing on their health and well-being, their sense of belonging, and ample opportunities for skill-building, work readiness, civic engagement, and creative expression—even creative expression that adults don't particularly enjoy. PYJ reminds us: It's not about the art; it's about the artist.

Positive youth development concepts are compatible with all youth programs, but they have to be customized in justice settings. The most com-

mon frameworks presume that young people possess conventional attitudes and a ready willingness to cooperate with pro-social peers and adults. These are not qualities that one finds in abundance among the youth involved in justice systems. Almost by definition, justice-involved youth have a greater inclination than other youth to violate rules, to disregard convention, and to defy authority.

These adolescent characteristics are challenging, of course, but they are also assets. In fact, societies only flourish when young people are encouraged to think of new solutions to old problems. How different would the world be today if Bill Gates and Steve Jobs had followed the rules and did exactly what IBM executives suggested? What kind of music would we have today if Chuck Berry, the Beatles, and Public Enemy had listened to their music teachers and stuck to classic forms rather than inventing their own?

We actually need young people who are bold, willing to challenge conventional thinking, and to break rules, but we also need them to respect others, to rely on logic rather than force, and to appreciate the corrosive effects of violence and exploitation. In short, our communities need powerful and creative young people who want to improve us and not simply to fight us. These



should seem like obvious concepts to anyone working around the youth justice system, but it is often surprisingly difficult to implement them in practice.

PYJ is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but all youth—especially those involved in the justice system—need basic supports and opportunities that facilitate their successful transi-

tion to adulthood. Even youth who require specialized interventions like trauma-informed services and substance abuse treatment still need basic developmental supports if they are to avoid future criminality and go on to lead positive, productive adult lives. The PYJ model was developed for youth justice systems working to conceptualize and implement such interventions.

Jeffrey A. Butts is director of the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. Previously he conducted youth justice research at the University of Chicago and the Urban Institute. Dr. Butts began his career in Oregon as a juvenile court substance use counselor and public child welfare worker. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan.

For more information about the PYJ Model, visit: www.johnjayrec.nyc/positiveyouthjustice





Ridge View Marching Band:

Changing Lives Through Music & Marching

At over 6'6", this Pastor and retired Colonel possesses the unique combination of kindness and authority to command Ridge View Academy's Marching Band and JROTC program. Willie Peacock, who has been at the heart of RVA's music program for nearly twenty years, hasn't just taught his students the motions of reading music scales on a page. He has infused the campus with the spirit of music, the individual expression of personal experience, and the power of music to unite individuals into a community.

Seventeen years ago, Mr. Peacock attended his first graduation at Ridge View Academy. As a long-time musician who played band throughout high school and college, he thought that RVA's graduation ceremony seemed empty without the presence of a band. The idea became a reality the following season when twelve students donned band uniforms and carried their instruments across sport fields, into pep rallies and graduation ceremonies. "This was really the first music program of its kind," said Mr. Peacock.

Marching bands are unique among extracurricular activities, which encourage creative expression. According to a study conducted by Kalamazoo University, marching bands' unique demands of discipline and dedication may not only make stu-

dents "smarter," but it gives them unique skills that include: listening, following directions and time management. These skills are paired with changes in the brain's structure. By scanning the brains of musicians, researchers have found an enlarged planum temporale region—the part of the brain related to reading skills—as compared to non-musicians. Plus, marching band has the unique ability to promote positive social relationships due to the demands of cooperation and teamwork.

For his music students, Mr. Peacock notices that the skills learned from playing a drum or trumpet go beyond hand-eye coordination. "I think music helps our students acquire coping skills. It's a way for them to hone their attention and to release their pent-up anxiety. The patterns of rhythms help them cope throughout the day. Even though many students want to become hip-hop artists—and to rap about past experiences in their lives—the study of music theory, time signatures and tempo reaches students, teaching them the language of the soul."

In addition to directing the band, Mr. Peacock encourages students to participate in an annual food drive that is organized through his church. For nearly twenty years, students who have learned to produce music instead of violence also learn

MUSIC MEETS COMMUNITY SERVICE

Every year around the holidays, Ridge View Music Director Willie Peacock invites students to another outlet near to his heart. Peacock, who is the Pastor of the Zion Baptist Community Church, organizes the “Zion Feed the Community”—an annual event that offers an array of supportive services to those in need in Aurora and the Denver Metro area.

Ridge View students arrive at the church early to set up. Then, depending on their skills, assist the other volunteers. Students enrolled in RVA’s Barbering Certification program offer those in need haircuts and shaves. Culinary Arts students assist volunteers in preparing warm homemade meals; students also assist in the delivery of warm meals to families, senior citizens and others who are homebound. Other students help organize clothing, shoes and backpack donations, or assist with community outreach by distributing church literature outlining the schedule of charitable events and church services.

Zion Baptist Church, a 151-year establishment in the community, impresses students with its old, stone building and heartfelt charitable events. The annual event impacts roughly 3,000-5,000 people in need each year and is as much a part of Ridge View’s culture as its marching band.

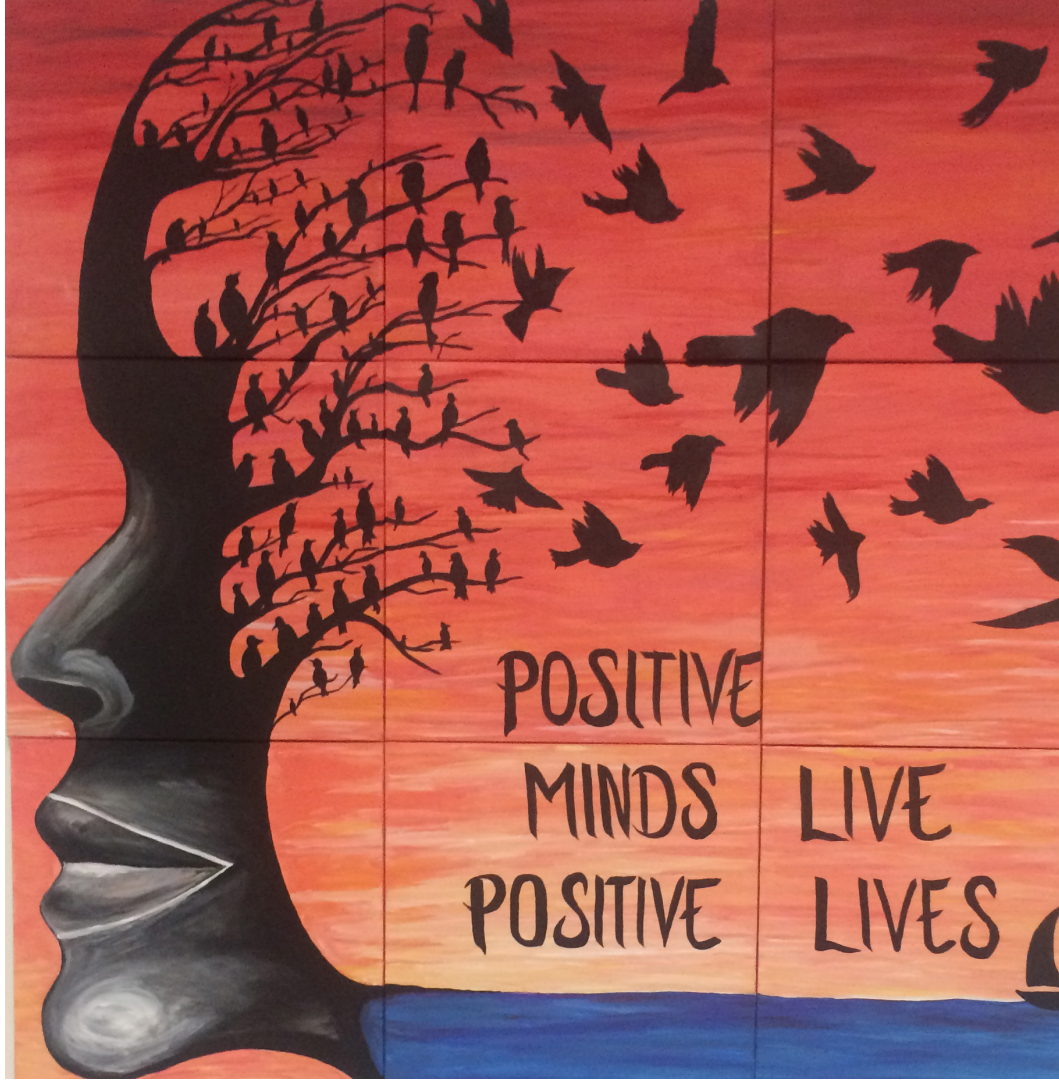
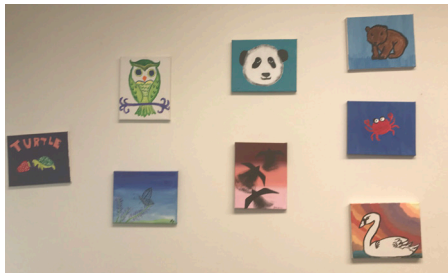
the value of giving back. This impulse translates back into the campus culture that the band exudes. When you’re there, you can’t help but feel it.

Even RVA Program Director Jay Koedam notices a difference on campus when the band is present. “The band really normalizes what we do here,” he said. “When the band is practicing on the campus, it lifts everyone’s spirits—staff, students—everyone.”

This year, the music program has expanded to include a new vocation called “Audio Production.” “Since a lot of our students are drawn to hip-hop, we purchased ‘Audio Tool’—a technology that enables them to master, mix and record music,” said Koedam. The credits earned in this new course are transferable to community colleges.

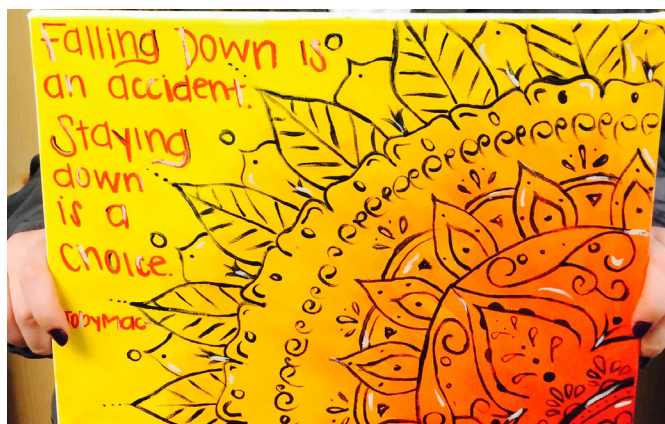
Five recent RVA graduates have continued their education in college—and continue their interest in music. One student, in particular reminds Mr. Peacock of the transformative power of music. “I had this student years ago who was having a hard time. He had a great love of music—and a passion for a drum called a quad. His love for music helped him cope with his problems and with his family. He kept up with the music and made some great changes in his life. He went to college and studied music. Now, he’s married with two children.”





Creating

Student Artists



Uta Halee's Art Club designs and creates large-scale murals that are displayed throughout the campus.

Uta Halee Academy has put its own unique twist on Rite of Passage's Academic Model program; for nearly 35 years, our organization met its mission through the creation of "Student-Athletes"—students who, through the pursuit of physical health also met their educational, emotional and professional goals. Along with Student-Athletes, Uta Halee is making positive changes in the lives of young women by creating Student-Artists who, through learning practical skills of various media, are learning to express themselves in healthy, productive ways.

The heart of Uta Halee's creative community resides in its Art Club, an elective activity that gives students an 8-week journey through the visual arts that (for the past two and a half years since the club was founded) culminates in a collaborative mural, conceived of and executed by Student-Artists. The Art Club, led by professional artist Laura Pearson, engages its students through projects that ask—both implicitly and plainly—who are you and how do you know?

Through the pursuit of creation—whether it be "Op Art" (art that depicts an optical illusion) or "Pop Art" (think: Andy Warhol)—students learn Native American mythology, color theory and perspective as they create works of art they are excited to hang in their rooms, and to present to their families. Students who participate in mural projects invest themselves in a project that, in a way, grants them a unique legacy—the capacity, through color and quote, to inspire other students and staff in the program.

Pearson, who has also facilitated a partnership with the Director of the Fine Arts program at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha, sees Uta Halee Academy as a place where young women can find themselves through healthy self-expression. So far, the campus is vibrant with art: from students who paint colorful canvases to the dance team members who use movement as their medium of expression to the Glee Club participants who sing at community events during the holiday season. And, the program is only continuing to grow, one brush stroke at a time.

Where ART Thou? A Play

Synopsis:

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then multimedia projects like newscasts, time lapses and music videos are worth millions. In an era of smart-phones, social media and video streaming, there might be no greater vocational skill set than working in digital formats. ROP Magazine traveled to Canyon State Academy (using the magic of technology) to get the scoop on CSA's Media Production Class.

Setting:

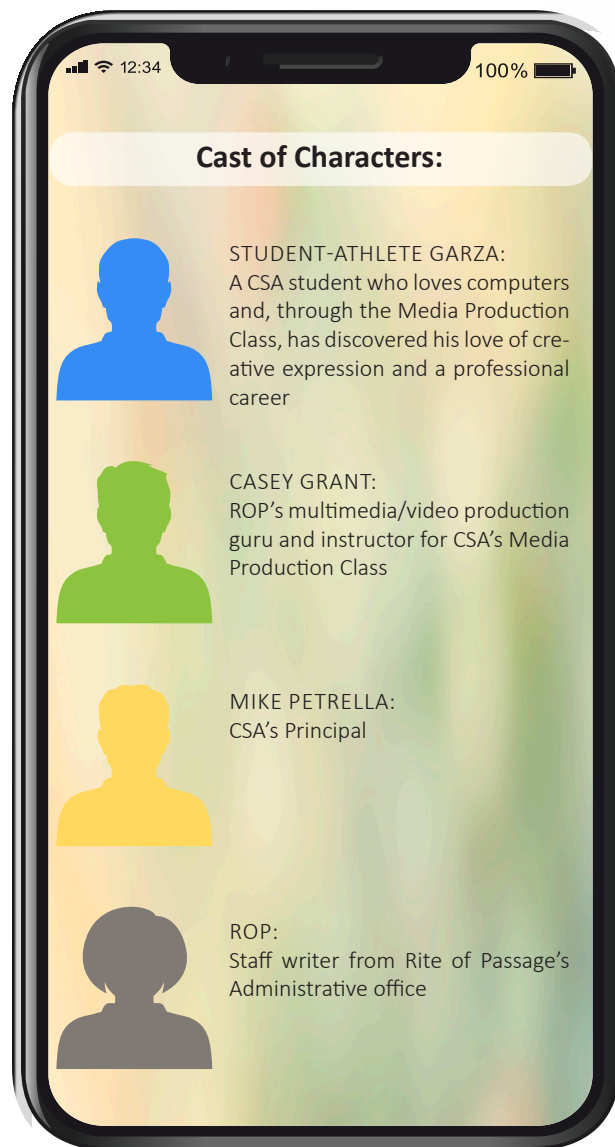
In a room filled with large-screened macs, a student stands before a green screen, reading from a teleprompter to give the campus news and weather report while other CSA students work the camera and other digital equipment. Student-Athlete Garza, Instructor Casey Grant and Principal Mike Petrella are seated at a quieter side of the room. ROP's staff writer asks the first question.

Thursday 2:16 PM

ROP: Can you give us an example of a project that your "beginning" students might tackle? We're especially interested in how a project for a beginner can also be "individualized."

CG: One of the first projects I give to my students is called the "Vacation Project." I ask them to research pictures of a place where they would like to take their "perfect" vacation. They collect these images and then I put them in front of a green screen, and I film them talking about their "vacation." Then, we work together to produce a video of the students acting like a tour guide with the images they found online in the background.

Read 2:19 PM



ROP: So, why did you want to take the Graphics/
Media Production class, Mr. Garza?

GARZA: Since I was little, I really loved computers. When I got to CSA, I signed up for the class and I loved what I was learning. I learned how to use After Effects, Premier, Photoshop...now I am working with Mr. Grant to apply for scholarships to a Graphic Design program at Texas Tech University.

Read 2:21 PM

Thursday 2:30 PM

ROP: Aside from developing skills that students can use in careers or post-secondary education, have you noticed any other benefit that students receive from the Graphics/Media Production class?

CG: I think the class really makes them look at themselves and their ideas more critically. I always listen to their ideas for projects and review pictures, videos and songs. I've had more than one student realize why a certain song or video is inappropriate. Once they really listen to the lyrics, they say things like: "I didn't realize this is what it said," or "I never thought about that movie that way before." It's not life-changing, but I think making artistic choices necessitates a certain degree of self-evaluation.

Read 2:35 PM

ROP: Mr. Petrella, as CSA Principal, what do you see when you walk into the Graphic/Media Production class?

MP: It's really my favorite class to visit—I learn a lot about the students by seeing the projects they are working on, and talking to them about it. They put a lot of their lives into the images and videos they produce; in many ways, their projects are like windows into their perceptions of themselves and the world.

Delivered

Expanding the Arts in

2018

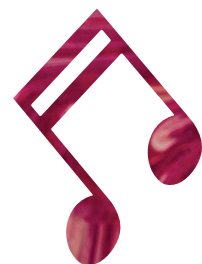
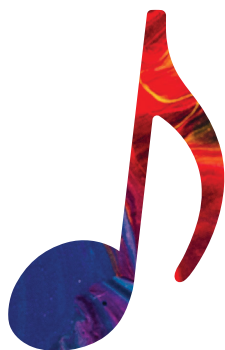
Raising the Barre: Getting into the Rhythm of Recovery

This year, Sierra Sage Academy made another impressive stride in providing trauma-informed and gender-specific programming by transforming its former “RAMs lounge” into a dance studio. The space that once housed a pool table, a maroon sofa, a big screen TV and a weight room is now an open, airy space with full-length mirrors that reflect the natural light and a barre—a traditional feature of a ballet dance studio.

The decision to transform the space into a dance studio has been in the works since Sierra Sage Academy’s inception when it became apparent that the old Rams lounge (with its overall “boyish” feel) didn’t contribute to the trauma-informed and gender-specific atmosphere of the rest of the campus. And, it isn’t just because dance is “feminine”—several studies into dance therapy and trauma-informed care have cited dance as a unique way of assisting victims of trauma to re-connect with their bodies.

According to the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), dance can decrease depression, improve mood and strengthen positive feelings about one’s self. Through building self-confidence, better self-esteem and body image, as well as communication and collaboration with others—not to mention the physical benefits of increased flexibility, strength and balance—dance offers a unique mix of physical, mental and emotional benefits for young women who have been the victims of trauma, neglect and abuse.

The studio, which will open in early 2018 with the help of a community partnership with a local dance studio, makes a bold statement about the specific needs of the students on SSA’s campus and gender-specific care: look out weight room, SSA is raising the barre.





Teaching the Universal Language of Music

For most, *The Nutcracker* is a ballet performance that ushers in the holiday season with dancing sugar plum fairies and a twinkling orchestral riff that sounds like falling snow. At Silver Oak Academy, though, newly hired Music Director (and musician) Yarborough-Charles Laws has recast the 1892 Tchaikovsky classic with a “hip-hop” feel. The piece will express what Laws has envisioned for Silver Oak’s music program: through a focus on “old school basics,” the program will teach students music literacy. “After all, music is the universal language. That’s why we [students at SOA] practice and play instrumental songs without lyrics. Not everybody speaks English, but everyone can be moved by a melody or rhythm.”

Unlike traditional high school music programs that teach students to play an instrument by associating the note on the page to the key or button on an instrument, music literacy is the understanding of how a song will be played and what it will sound like without actually playing it. “The students, they read it, they write it, and then they play it,” Laws said.

Laws, a musician since the age of 14, has taught music in inner-city schools for 29 years. His position at Silver Oak Academy is his first “private, rural academy”—and the music program, so far, is his “diamond in the rough.” Due to the students’ short tenure at the academy, he encourages them to focus on the keyboard or percussion instruments. He has formed a drum squad to perform at football and basketball games.

For the holidays, the students will learn ten songs to perform (*The Nutcracker* theme is one of them). With each song, Laws uses a multi-disciplinary approach. They learn the significance of their songs through their allusions to literary or historical events. They also explore the mathematic and scientific aspects of the songs they learn: the auditory spectrum of the human ear, say, or the permutations of patterns that coalesce to form a beat.

“The students...they see the connections. They say that music teaches them a formula for other things,” Laws said. “It’s therapeutic, in a way... not just for the musicians, but for the listeners, too.”





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