

Berkshire Hills Music Academy

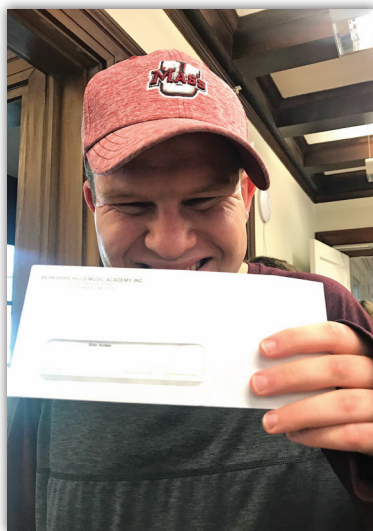
Life Skills • Vocation • Music

www.berkshirehills.org

WINTER 2018 Newsletter

Vocation at BHMA: Empowering Students & Encouraging Workplace Inclusion

With a hard-earned paycheck in hand, BHMA LIVE member Brian Krutzler breaks out into a wide smile as he poses to mark the moment. Vocational Advisor Melina Garro-Duplisea captures Krutzler's excitement and is moved by the significance of the achievement herself. As she says, "it is rewarding to see students feel successful when they receive their first paycheck." **Participating in paid work is an important part of becoming independent and it instills in our individuals a sense of self-worth.** Every subsequent check bolsters



LIVE MEMBER BRIAN KRUTZLER HOLDING A PAYCHECK

students' confidence and is a testament to the efforts of BHMA's Vocation Department. Officially established in the fall of 2017, the Department's primary goals are for students to explore vocational opportunities, find paid employment suited to their interests and abilities, and feel empowered like Krutzler. In doing this, our individuals are fostering inclusion in the workforce for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Vocation is woven throughout BHMA's programming, helping students develop job skills in engaging and creative ways. The Two Year Certificate Program lays the foundation—in the first year, students participate in weekly internship rotations at local nonprofits, followed by group music performances at area nursing homes as part of the second-year Music & Human Services seminar. These experiences help our individuals identify where their strengths and interests lie as they practice working as a team and using appropriate social skills. In the LIVE Program, the Vocation Department expands on students' vocational training in more individualized and in-depth ways through its three track options: art, music, and general vocation. Students can make original works of art, perform gigs with a band, or work in the community—the underlying objective is to provide innovative choices for our individuals to pursue meaningful, paid employment. This customizable approach allows students to grow their independence on their own terms.

Vocation Director Andy Anderson believes our individuals "have a strong desire to prove themselves as contributing members of society and a growing workforce," an idea that is central to the Department's efforts to establish general vocation opportunities for students beyond BHMA. Vocation staff members like Garro-Duplisea **teach the basics of searching and applying for a job, such as how to write a resume and respond to interview questions, and also strategize with students to find them the most suitable line of work.** Going through the pre-vocational training process helps match students to one or more of the thirteen community worksites, places like Serenity Yoga at the South Hadley Commons. Each month, student workers Matt Allen, Jen Barrett, Mario Bonavita, and Stephen Gordon get hands-on experience by helping to maintain the yoga studio. Serenity Yoga Director Michele Lyman calls their service **"invaluable to the business,"** and enjoys passing on lessons to the students by sharing her expectations as the employer, offering feedback on their performance, and answering any questions they may have. These opportunities help our individuals widen their knowledge base and their sense of accomplishment.

From Ledges Golf Club and TJ Maxx, to Rock Valley Tool and the Eric Carle Museum, **BHMA's students are employed in a variety of businesses around the area.** These mutually beneficial partnerships forged by the Vocation Department are of great significance to our program, but they have larger implications as well. **Students take pride in knowing they are making important contributions to the community through their services. Perhaps more importantly, however, they are raising visibility, promoting acceptance, and changing perceptions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.** Lyman recognizes the power in this, writing, "I am so blessed to be part of BHMA students' journey toward inclusion in the workforce."



LIVE MEMBER JOEY GAGNON AT SERENITY YOGA

Paid employment propels our individuals to a more independent, fulfilling life, while bringing forth an increasingly equitable society.

A Message from BHMA



Amazing work is done every day at BHMA.

In July, we welcomed Frank Orlando as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees. Frank has been a Trustee since 2013, was Treasurer for four years, and served as interim Executive Director prior to that. Frank has brought a tremendous amount of business acumen, strategic leadership, and passion for BHMA to his new role. **He will play an integral role as we move forward with many exciting initiatives to advance our mission and services.**

BHMA will soon have a new look! This fall, we engaged the services of a marketing and branding agency to assess our logo, website, and other marketing materials to **generate a fresh, more modern look.** The process involves our board, committee members, parents, and other community stakeholders to assist us in gaining feedback on how BHMA is perceived. Stay tuned for the reveal of our new logo and look just in time for the 20th anniversary of our incorporation!

BHMA continues to grow in so many inspiring and creative ways. Our Vocational Art initiative, the Ascending Artist Program, will soon have a new location off campus, allowing students to create more pieces of art, note cards, ceramics, and other items to sell and **earn an income for their talents.** We are also partnering with local companies and businesses to employ our individuals in new settings. Our musicians continue to share their gifts in the local area, across New England, and beyond. The evenings and weekends are filled with activities, clubs, and events to strengthen integration into our community.

The gains made by our individuals have been made possible by the remarkable support of our incredible donors! **We are lucky to have you supporting our mission and continuing to believe we can all do more.** In September, we honored the donors who participated at a leadership level in our *Building our Future* campaign with a donor wall unveiling at the Bernon Music Center. It was a lovely ceremony allowing donors to see their names on the wall, tour the building, and enjoy refreshments, music, and camaraderie.

Thank you! Your generosity throughout the year provides us with the resources needed to develop new programs to meet the ever-changing needs of our individuals, to train and foster the professional growth of our staff, and to make an impact in the lives of individuals with ID/DD. **We appreciate your continued support and giving!**

With much gratitude,

Michelle N. Theroux
Executive Director

Frank Orlando
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USING MUSIC TO REACH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES: KATHRYN PETERSON'S LIFE AFTER BHMA



BHMA ALUMNA KATHRYN PETERSON

Discovering music opened a world of possibilities for Berkshire Hills Music Academy alumna Kathryn Peterson. As a child with cerebral palsy, Peterson, now 38, grew up immersing herself in songs and melodies—singing in church, performing in school productions, attending Broadway musicals, and following and judging American Idol in her living room. She first learned of BHMA through her cousin and was inspired to attend our Summer Program and experience it for herself; she then enrolled as a full-time student and embarked on four years of growth. From 2006 to 2010, **Peterson thrived in our unique atmosphere that welcomed and nurtured her love of music, while teaching her how to channel her passion into productive ways.** Eight years later, she is a music facilitator for preschool children in her hometown of Lynbrook, New York. Peterson credits our program with helping to pave the way for the rest of her future. “I am so happy that I went to BHMA,” she says. “If I had not...I would not be doing what I’m doing today.”

Peterson is an active, kind, and thoughtful individual with an upbeat nature. Though she admits that having cerebral palsy “can be hard” and she “need[s] help with some things, such as transportation and cooking,” **Peterson has always fully participated in life around her.** This is true of her time at BHMA, where she maximized our program offerings—taking voice lessons, musical theater, and social skills classes, in addition to therapeutic horseback riding, Boltwood, Special Olympics, and Best Buddies. In Peterson’s four years at BHMA, **her independence bloomed as she reached new landmarks,** like living in an apartment, successfully navigating a kitchen, and practicing public speaking as a member of the marketing team. Through all of these experiences, Peterson developed genuine and enduring connections with classmates, staff, Mount Holyoke students, and her Best Buddy.

BHMA was a significant step in Peterson’s professional development, one that was tailored to her desire to share music with others. Led by past Music Instructor Kathryn Lively, Peterson flourished in our Music & Human Services seminar,

allowing her to create and perform music programs for seniors, as well as preschool and elementary school children. MHS gave Peterson an opportunity to learn how to craft lesson plans and setlists that were specific to the audience, and to implement her social skills teachings during fieldwork outings. As Director of Music & Music Vocation Karen Carreira recalls, Peterson, “was very dedicated and invested in that work.” Another venue that expanded on the lessons of MHS was her work in the radio booth at Mount Holyoke College. Peterson hosted her own two-hour weekly radio show for more than two and a half years—**combining her public speaking skills with her ability to use music to reach different audiences.** She had many local fans that listened, and her mom Fay would tune in from home. MHS and the radio show were windows into what Peterson’s future would hold.

Peterson now holds a paid position as a music teacher in Lynbrook’s preschool, where she introduces children to the wonders of music. Similar to MHS, she creates her own lesson plans by listening for songs the students will enjoy and burning CDs. Peterson also works on a volunteer basis running a karaoke-style music program and serving as the official DJ for young adults with developmental disabilities at the local AHRC. **The work she does has a true impact in the lives of those she meets;** she is said to enter the room to cheers and can get one hundred people dancing. Carreira believes Peterson “found a special niche” while at BHMA, and states “we are very proud of Kathryn and her ongoing efforts to use music to help others.”

Eight years after BHMA, Peterson is “very busy and engaged” in life. She lives in her own apartment in the family home—maintaining her independence while having a nearby support system. **Our program prepared Peterson for a future that centered around music,** as music has always been the most authentic and rewarding way for her to express herself and connect with others. We “will forever be grateful for the part that BHMA played in making it possible,” writes Fay. In June 2017, Peterson and her mom returned to campus for the ribbon cutting of the Bernon Music Center and were moved to see BHMA’s expanded capacity to change the lives of people like her.



PETERSON SHOPS WITH HER ROOMMATES AT
BIG Y IN 2010

The Ability to Make a Difference!

Your generous support for the Annual Fund will help ensure our **abilities** continue to lead us to greater success and independence in all of our lives.

berkshirehills.org/giving



MARDI GRAS GALA

With beads and masks strewn atop every surface, on September 29 Berkshire Hills Music Academy's backyard was transformed into a scene straight out of Mardi Gras. Close to 200 revelers arrived on the bright fall day in hues of green, purple, and gold—**ready to let the good times roll for a worthy cause.**



The event was a celebration of BHMA's students and its generous supporters. Guests viewed LIVE member and resident videographer Eman Tuzman-Eagan's latest production, "Thank You from BHMA" as part of the night's official program.



Featuring the many faces of our growing community, the video showcased our diverse offerings and expressed gratitude for those who have made the dream of BHMA into a reality. The Troupe then kicked off the evening's dancing with an upbeat and lively set that included a special appearance by Grammy award winning saxophonist and former BHMA staff member, Gary Smulyan. With numbers like "Midnight Special" and "When the Saints Go Marching In," **they wowed the crowd with the sounds of the South.**

Proceeds from the Mardi Gras Gala help support and sustain the operation of our program. Top sponsors of the event were Kay & Peter Bernon, Susanna Peyton & John Campbell, E Ink Corporation, Rosemary & Justin McCormack, and PeoplesBank.



Berkshire Hills Music Academy
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Dylan Connolly and Riley Brown's original artwork was featured at the Holyoke/Chicopee DDS office Art Show on November 15



Special Olympics soccer team member Connor Thompson received his medal after the Bandits placed third in their final tournament



On November 10, more than 100 fans attended a benefit concert featuring Sullivan Fortner and Roberta Gambarini, with BHMA's Jazz Trio as the opening act



In Emotional Wellbeing class, LIVE members wore cards with different emotions and tried to guess what it was as the group provided clues

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