

Breanna's Gift



AN ARTS PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH
CANCER & OTHER SERIOUS ILLNESSES



News!

Summer 2019

Dear Friends,

We call it our newsletter for a reason, and we have *so* much news this summer. It's all great news, but I'm choosing to save the best for last!

In February, we held our 2nd annual **Radio Workshop** led by voiceover professional Beth Chaplin. The kids at Ronald McDonald House created their version of Aesop's *The Lion and the Mouse*. Listen to the recording on our website, and we think you'll be amazed at what you "see" when you only have sound to tell a story.

We've just completed our 10th annual **Drama Camp** led by director Anne McNaughton. Anne took the kids through 3 days of activities: drama exercises and games, costume and set painting, and reading their lines. Camp choreographer Shelley Westgor taught the dances. The kids rehearsed and rehearsed as they prepared for the "Big Show." This year was an encore performance of "The Wizard of Oz," where there is always excitement – the drama of who will be cast for which character unfolds in the most amiable of ways. Decisions are based on who can attend camp on which day, so flexibility is key; sometimes, we might have three Dorothy's! The photos show you some of the fun.

Another **Breanna's Star** event has come and gone, and the Breanna's Gift community did not disappoint with its overwhelming support. After expenses, we are thrilled to share we raised over \$50,000 to continue bringing the gift of the arts to the children we visit each week. The wood sculpture art project for this year's event was led by our teaching artist Cecilia Schiller, who specializes in automata. Children at Ronald McDonald House and Children's Minnesota hospitals in Minneapolis and St. Paul created amazing wood sculpture collages for the live auction. A special thank you to our event volunteers, teaching artists, board of directors, patrons and donors; we couldn't have done it without you!



Radio Workshop

Drama Camp...
Scenes from
The Wizard of Oz



Breanna's Star



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SUMMER

Marsha Ovitz welcomes
Heather Christopherson,
new executive director
for Breanna's Gift.



As promised, I've saved the best for last. Our summer classes started on June 1st...ok, that's not it...but also on June 1st, after an extensive search, Breanna's Gift welcomed **Heather Christopherson** as our new executive director. If you're wondering what I'm going to do, I am happy to report my new role as program director allows me to direct my full attention on the arts and the creative side of Breanna's Gift while Heather concentrates on her areas of expertise in fundraising, donor communications, fundraising, and all that is required of a nonprofit executive director. We make a terrific team, so it is with joy and enthusiasm that I say, *"take it away Heather!"*



What a pleasure it is to contribute to my first Breanna's Gift newsletter as executive director! While I have been familiar with the organization's mission and phenomenal programming since my days at Ronald McDonald House, I am gaining a whole new level of appreciation for all the hard work and talent our teaching artists bring to children every week. They're an inspiration!

Children (and The Dude!) had
fun with shadow puppets.



When you do good things, you make good friends. A friend of Marsha shared a grant opportunity for Breanna's Gift. **The Beim Foundation** hadn't been on our radar, but Marsha submitted a proposal and we are now the proud recipients of a \$10,000 gift from this multi-generational family foundation. Thank you, Beim Foundation!



Art Takeout™ is our series of eight individual art projects designed by Breanna's Gift teachers for children who are unable to leave their hospital room to join group classes. This July over 800 are being sent to hospitals around the country. Each project takes a tremendous amount of prep work, and thanks to volunteer groups like Liberty Property Trust, Parsons Electric and art students from DeLaSalle who come back year after year, many hands make light work and make this program possible. A special welcome to Denise Crestik, from Parsons Electric who is joining us as the new volunteer Art Takeout Coordinator.

National Dance Day is Sat, Sept 21!

This annual celebration encourages Americans of all ages to incorporate dance into their lives. To learn this year's routine, visit americandancemovement.org

Did You Know... you can create a birthday fundraiser on Facebook and ALL proceeds (no fees!) can go to Breanna's Gift? In the age of minimalism, who needs another gift to re-gift? Follow the easy instructions from your Facebook page to get started. Don't forget to "like" us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram while you're at it!

Have a great summer!

Marsha Ovitz
Founder and Program Director

Heather Christopherson
Executive Director

