

Michaela's Story

As your county arts council, ArtsinStark actively seeks artists and small non-profit organizations that are doing wonderful work in our community. Through our Special Project Grants, we provide funds for targeted activities that create smarter kids, new jobs, and healthier communities through the arts.

An independent Art Therapist and a teacher from Eastgate Childhood Development Center co-wrote — and were awarded — an ArtsinStark Special Project Grant that is making a tremendous project possible. Eastgate teacher Patty Swineheart said, “Our students and their families are challenged daily to “keep up” and to “fit it” despite impairments and/or disabilities that can make participation in jobs, routine daily tasks and even recreational activities difficult.”



While all students enjoyed the activity, what was especially endearing to staff, were the efforts their “typical peers” took to assist and encourage their friends complete the project. Michaela, an outgoing 4 year-old, is the younger sibling of a former Eastgate student diagnosed with autism. Michaela assisted her friends by giving compliments, and verbally encouraging them when parts of the projects stretched their capabilities. She even laid down on the floor, holding hands with one friend who needed the extra support.



Patty continued, “This program spotlighted both the adaptations needed for total participation as well as the assistance needed. Because of her experiences as both a sibling of a special needs student and her experiences in the “typical peer” program at Eastgate, Michaela had an opportunity to be recognized for the assistance that she gives every day.”

As Eastgate Childhood Development Center partners with ArtsinStark to assist in integrating people with disabilities in to the community, the support of caring donors is incredibly empowering. It makes those we serve hopeful that members of the community are ready to help. Michaela said it best herself: “My favorite thing is to help my friends, because it makes me feel happy.”

Art Changes Lives

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