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Promoting the creative power in people with disabilities through the arts.

PRESS RELEASE

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VSA arts of Maine Brings Art Opening and Students' Films to Denmark Arts Center

BRUNSWICK, ME – VSA arts of Maine announces a gala evening of arts events at the Denmark Arts Center on Friday, May 30, 2008.

The opening reception for VSA's Matter of Perception exhibit will be held from 7:00 – 8:30 pm. That same evening, beginning at 7:00 PM, students from Molly Ockett Middle School will present short films and stories about four local artists. Light refreshments will be served.

Artists Residency

Students have been exploring the arts their community with folklorist Jo Radner and filmmaker Michael Dana, by interviewing and filming four local artists: musician Ben Hammond, painter Pat Thurston, and metal workers Rod and Mert Blood. This opportunity for students to work with professional artists is part of VSA arts of Maine's Artists Residency Program, which aims to improve the quality of education of students with and without disabilities by showing teachers how to use art to teach academic subjects and meet the Maine Learning Results.

Matter of Perception

VSA arts of Maine began showcasing the work of adult artists with disabilities in "A Matter of Perception" exhibitions in 1996. The exhibits include work done in community facilities and, increasingly, by independent artists with disabilities. The Denmark exhibit will run from May 17 – June 17, and includes works by these local artists: Kristin Chase, Naples; Missy Goodwin, Rumford; Ellen Halpin, Rumford; Geraldine Luxton, South Paris; Becky Moody, Norway; and William Seigny, West Paris

Work on display comes from every corner of the state and from many mediums: stained glass, fiber art, wall art made from wood and from wire, photographs, watercolors, acrylic paintings, and more. The artists come from a wide range of artistic training and backgrounds, and represent the spectrum of what it means to have a disability.

During 2008 every piece of art submitted will be shown at least once at one of 15 exhibitions across the state. At each installation a different group of jurors will select a small number of works to go on to the 2009 exhibition. This juried show will travel across Maine throughout 2009

The Denmark Arts Center is located at 50 West Main Street, on Route 160 in Denmark Village. <http://www.denmarkarts.org/>

Funding for these programs comes from VSA arts of Maine and the Maine Community Foundation with in-kind support from the Denmark Arts Center and MSAD 72.

For more information, contact Rachel Spatz, Program and Education Director at *VSA Arts of Maine*, 930-0190 or rspatz@vsartsmaine.org

To see images from Matter of Perception 2007, and for more info about *VSA arts of Maine*, go to www.vsartsmaine.org

The following photographs are available upon request:

Paintings from the Matter of Perception art exhibit:

William Seigny, West Paris
Window Box, 2007, color photograph, 5" x 7"

Judy Grace, Bath
Herr G. Neus, 2007, acrylic on masonite, 68" x 18"

Geraldine Luxton, South Paris
Yellow and Pink Bouquet, 2008, acrylic on canvas board, 14" x 11"

Kevin Warren, Augusta
Face in Target, 2007, pastel on paper, 12" x 18"

Photographs of the students' at work:

Filmmaker Michael Dana coaches middle school student Greyson Hikel in filming Ben Hammond

Middle school student Thea Hart interviews and films Ben Hammond

Pat Thurston demonstrates her work.

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ABOUT VSA arts of Maine

VSA arts of Maine is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing innovative and inclusive arts, educational and cultural opportunities for children and adults with disabilities in Maine. Programs include artist residencies in schools, workshops for teachers and artists, mentoring for adult artists with disabilities, exhibitions by artists with disabilities, and partnerships with cultural venues throughout the state to improve accessibility.

VSA arts of Maine is part of the *VSA arts* international network, dedicated to promoting education and lifelong learning opportunities in the arts for people with disabilities.

Founded in 1974 by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, *VSA arts* is an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Formerly named Very Special Arts, *VSA arts* changed its name in 1999, eliminating the use of the word "special" to honor the progress made by members of the disability community since the organization's inception.