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THE NEWSLETTER THAT KEEPS YOU INFORMED

ACH COMMUNICATES

THE GEORGE BENSON SHOWCASE AT THE ELSIE HILLMAN AUDITORIUM

December 17, 2021 was an evening that the children had been waiting for. They had been practicing their music, their dance and of course their art. Friday evening their parents and friends and other family members would see how great they are. The

end of the season showcase provided an opportunity to celebrate the creativity and talents of ACH Out of School students. This showcase included theatre, dance, art, music and videography. Our students age ranges are 5 through 12 and most of them had never heard of George Benson. ACH not only creates art, but as a part of the process, we teach our students about great artists in all genres. Every child likes to know that there are possibilities that their dreams can come true. There is no greater encouragement than actually learning about someone whose life is like theirs that has succeeded in making his/her dreams a reality.

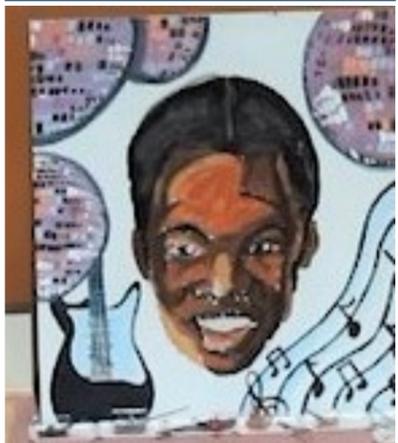
Why would the children be interested in this Benson? The answer is because the children could easily relate to his story. He grew up in their neighborhood—the Hill District of Pittsburgh. He went to their schools and graduated from Schenley High School. George Benson won his first singing contest at the age of 4 and later at the age of 7 he began playing the ukulele at a corner drug store where he made a few dollars. As our teaching artists shared his talents in their classes, the children were eager to dance to his music, paint his portrait, and interpret his life story in drama.

The entire program department of ACH worked together to bring to life the story of the Hill District native. The dance teaching artist played the music of George Benson and choreographed the dances to that music. The art teaching artist designed a paint by number portrait of Benson. The media art teacher gathered videos of the clubs and streets and history of the neighborhood where Benson grew up. The collective work of the teaching artists created a work of art that the students were proud to showcase.

As the audience listened to the well known songs of "Give me the night" and "Masquerade", the students portrayed the dancing at the "Little Paris Night Club" where Benson, at the age of 8, performed on Friday and Saturday nights. While the music was playing, there were students who were simultaneously painting the portrait of George Benson on stage.



Teen age George Benson



ACH students concept of George Benson painted on stage during the showcase



Article continued on page 2

ACH COMMUNICATES is published quarterly by ACH Clear Pathways!

It is our desire to keep in touch with each of you and to let you know that your support is being used to fulfill the mission of ACH:

"To nurture creativity and performing arts by providing an opportunity to youth and family within the arts"

We want to hear from you! Please give us your feedback on this newsletter. Let us know what you would like to see in our next edition. We welcome all comments.

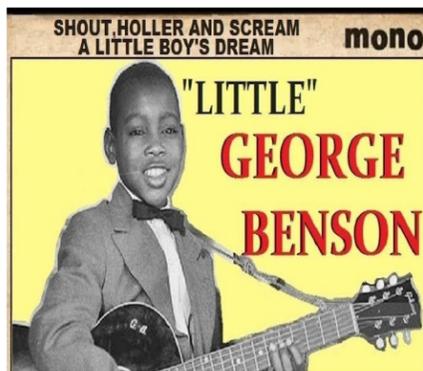
Thank you

Ms. Annie Grice

Writer/Layout/Editor

Email us at: admin@achcp.org

The staff was able to show the students “Little George Benson” who was 9 years old when he recorded his first single. His mother did not approve of him leaving home at such a young age, but after listening to others, she finally consented for him to go to New York City. His first single did not do well, so he returned home. His education had suffered and his behavior needed to be addressed. As a result, his guitar was taken from him until he improved in his school work. He did not return to performing as a full time artist until after he graduated from high school. This story is not any different than the parents of our ACH students. Our parents want what is best for their children. ACH Clear Pathways is committed to the well being of each child, which includes positive academic performance as well as an appreciation for the arts.



Having a space to be creative is most important to an artist. Jill has found that space at ACH. She states that she is now working in the best art studio that she has even been in—better than he college art studio. It is new and clean. She is able to have several art stations simultaneously. She is able to organize several opportunities. The walls, ceiling, the colors and the light makes it a happy and warm space. It is a place she loves to return to. Her favorite part of the room is her yellow cabinets because she can draw on them because they're draw erase cabinets.



Above—Dramatization of George and his mother discussing him leaving home. George gets his opportunity to be on stage and as a singing guitarist.



Left—Christian Tarrant, who played “little George Benson, is 10 years old and attends St. Benedict the Moor School.

Christian began attending the out of school program at ACH in kindergarten. He is high energy and loves to participate in the showcases. He enjoys playing the drums and just being involved in everything.

ACH believes in giving children the opportunity to dream about possibilities.

Everything is possible for students attending ACH



Jill’s favorite part of the art room. Fully equipped, including a sink and storage areas for the artists!



These signs tell the story of ACH! This is Our House and creative minds are what we are looking for. When you enter our house, you will be met with colorful art pieces throughout the building. The “Our House” piece was designed by one of our newest program assistants, John Bedortha. Jill says that John helps her fill in the gap when needed. Jill believes that one of her greatest challenges is making sure that all the children, no matter what their abilities, or interests, are able to stay engaged and allow them time just to find their creative selves. Our teaching artists and program assistants work in unity for the creation of art and loving kindness.



Left—The stage was flooded with colored lights as the students performed to “Give me the night”!



CURTAIN CALL



Jill one on one with Josiah

Introducing ACH's Visual Art Teaching Artist

Ms. Jill Kuhlman

Ms. Jill, as she is known by the students, is one of our newest members of the ACH team. She teaches visual art, which includes sensory materials such as sculpture, clay, yarn, sewing and of course painting and drawing with various materials. Jill is well suited for this position. Although she is a native to Pittsburgh, she received a bachelor's degree in Community Art from Wheaton College outside of Chicago, Illinois. When asked what is community art, her response further proved that she is the right person to help ACH fulfill its Mission. She stated that "community art is less focused on the product that you've created and more focused on community building, healing, and empowering its members." That philosophy of a teaching artist helps our students feel empowered to meet new challenges. This feeling of empowerment will help not only our individual students but the community we serve.

Jill loves working with children. She states that she loves how playful and full of wonder they are. The children encourage her to always stay curious, keep learning and playing. She connects with the children through conversation and art. She says that she loves their honesty and openness.

Our visual art teaching artist loves working at ACH because she says "it's a wonder-

ful tight knit community of people who are uplifting to be around. Jill says that ACH has given her many opportunities to work as both an artist and a teaching artist within the Hill District and beyond. She feels encouraged as an artist, a teacher, and a person. She believes that she will be an asset to ACH because of her creative and can-do personality. She is always excited to tackle whatever creative challenge or opportunity that comes her way.

Jill is a "team-player"! She loves the way that they all can work together to face challenges and achieve new goals. When asked what she likes best about working with ACH, she responded that "the work environment here is incredibly positive and encouraging. I can tell that my co-workers believe in me and our students. They will stop at nothing to create wonderful artistic opportunities for the people within our community and our staff!"

Jill's talents don't stop at the drawing board. She read the biography of George Benson and then helped to create the script for the play that the children performed in their Showcase of George Benson. She is currently working on adapting a script for the summer Showcase. She is also working on a semester long art project with the visual art majors that she is really excited about. It is not hard to believe Jill when she says that "I love both visual art and theater and I am working on projects in both those areas.

Jill is part of the planning group for our upcoming senior programming. She wants to see different ways of connecting with seniors than she has done previously with the children. This spring ACH is planning to open art sessions for seniors in the community. Jill says that "hopefully our participants from the community will feel a connection with ACH and want to tell their friends about it.

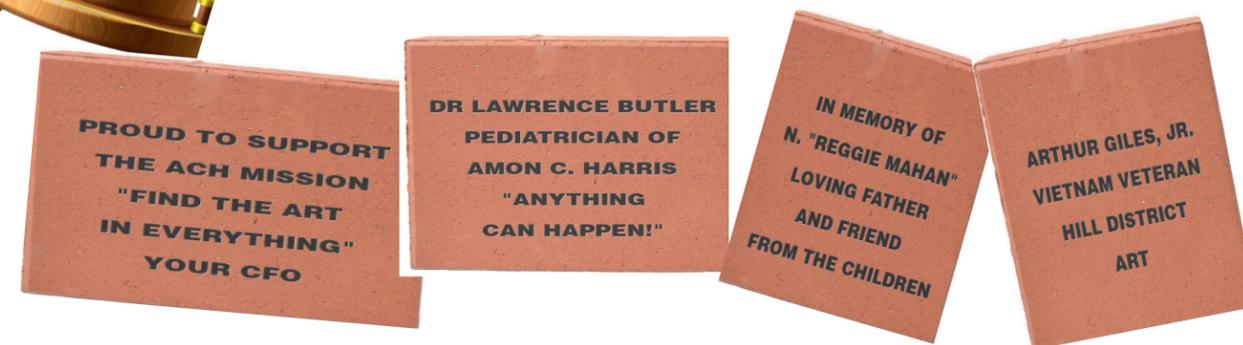


An example of the team spirit that Jill loves is Ms. Lauryn, Ms. Amani and Ms. Danai all working with student Josiah in creating a mural for the dance studio. Before all the students arrive, Jill has a creative warm up painting that students may choose to work on. Kids need to have opportunities to choose what projects they want to be a part of. It's always different and sometime staff members are as interested as the students.

Memorial/Legacy Bricks



You planned on ordering your brick the last time they were offered, but you got busy with other things and you simply forgot! We understand. That is why we decided to offer this last opportunity for you to place your brick in the ACH Clear Pathways Art Center and Hillman Auditorium courtyard. The construction workers have been busy right through this winter to have our courtyard ready by spring. The ACH Clear Pathways Hillman Center Courtyard will be a place of lasting memories. It is here that you will be able walk through the courtyard and read the names of those who have been a part of the Hill District community or those who have impacted your life. Whether you choose to have a memorial brick in honor of a loved one or whether you choose a legacy brick so that your life may be remembered at ACH, this is the last offering. **Yes, time is running out!** Here are a few samples of bricks previously ordered and received. Please take a moment to think about purchasing your brick.



The donation for each brick is \$250.00. You may inscribe 6 lines with a maximum of 17 characters per line. The 17 characters includes spaces, punctuation, and letters. This red brick measures 8 x 8. Our final order will be placed within two weeks. Don't wait—order now!

You may purchase your brick by going to our website at www.achclearpathways.org

Please click on the banner **2022 Creative Spark Fundraiser** and then click on **Purchase Legacy Brick. Do not click on Donate!** You may use your email address to complete your purchase. ACH will contact you via email to receive your inscription for your brick.

If you have any questions, please call us at 412-815-0271 Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. –4:00 p.m.

The ramp from Centre Avenue has been prepared so that you may have ease of access to cherish the memories inscribed on your brick.

We can't wait to sit with you in the new Courtyard.



Meet Ms. Lauryn Henson



As ACH Clear Pathways has continued to grow in physical space and the number of students it serves, its staff has grown proportionately. A very important addition to the staff is Miss Lauryn Henson. Lauryn is an administrative assistant who is creative and talented. Although her job title would suggest that she only performs administrative work, her gifts and abilities make her an indispensable team member of the program department as well as an outreach assistant. Lauryn was born and raised in the Hill District. Lauryn is a quiet critical thinker. Her first introduction to ACH occurred in 2010 when she was a member of a girl scout troop housed in the Blakey building in the Hill District. Her troop leader was none other than Ms. Danaï, the current Program Manager of ACH. Lauryn graduated from Seton LaSalle Catholic High School and later attended Allegheny Community College on the North Side. Lauryn's work experience began at the Brighton Heights Senior Center as a recreation leader. She assisted in preparing

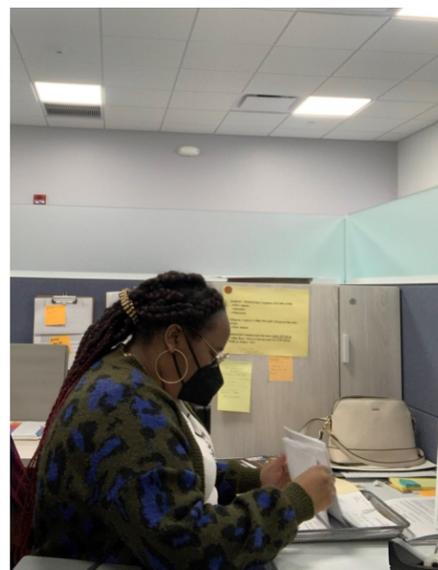
arts and craft projects for the seniors. She brought her bright smile and laughter to the seniors when they played bingo and as she helped serve lunch. While at the senior center, Lauryn became proficient in Microsoft skills, including creating Excel spread sheets. Her time spent at Brighton Heights prepared Lauryn for her role at ACH. Lauryn said that Brighton Heights helped her become a more outgoing person. It helped her to develop relationships. Lauryn began at ACH in early 2021 and since that time she has created a demand for her time from both the staff and the children. Lauryn's quiet manner belies the creative talent that lies beneath the efficient administrative assistant.

ACH had previously purchased a Cricut machine to design and make various projects; however, none of the staff had the time to learn how to use it. The machine could do everything, if only someone knew what to do with it! Lauryn was asked if she knew how to use it and she said, "I'll figure it out" and she did just that. She designed and created the summer camp t-shirts for students and staff. She designed tote bags and coffee cups. She created intricate letters to place on the bulletin board. Lauryn amazed the students when she created a "Grinch" for the children's Christmas tree! Everyone wanted Lauryn on their team. The staff knew that Ms. Annie, the Executive Assistant, would have a fit if it was suggested that Lauryn was going to transfer completely from her administrative role to that of a program assistant. Lauryn would just laugh! Her patience and attention to detail made her invaluable in the administrative department as she prepared billings or prepared donor correspondence in the office. Lauryn's quiet charm is invaluable as she guides guests on tours through the building.

Lauryn loves her dual role. She said what she likes best is "the ability to still be creative while still being an administrative assistant. She says "it is a fulfilling position". Lauryn likes working with children because it helps bring out her creativity. The idea to include the paint by number portrait of George Benson in the winter Showcase was a result of her desire to bring out the best in the children so that others could see what she saw in them.



Lauryn's unique contributions to ACH cover the best of the meticulous administrator and the kid at heart who loves to play and be creative.



Lauryn is currently the architect of the upcoming Hill District Arts Festival. This project had been slated for last summer; however, concern for the health and safety of the community members caused ACH to postpone the event. Lauryn is the person checking on the city requirements and licenses. Lauryn is reaching out to headline entertainers so that this event will be memorable. She said she's excited about this upcoming event this summer. She takes great pride in the work she does in the office and in the community.

While Lauryn is professionally preparing for the Hill District Arts Festival, she is continuing to work on the in-house projects of keeping an updated inventory of every piece of equipment that ACH owns. Lauryn works closely with the bookkeeper to ensure that every bill is received and paid.

When Lauryn was asked what her long range goals were, after some thought, she stated: "Everyone loves and respects ACH and they want to be a part of where we're going next! I want to be a part of the future of ACH!"

There is no question that Lauryn will continue to be a valued member of the ACH Clear Pathways team!



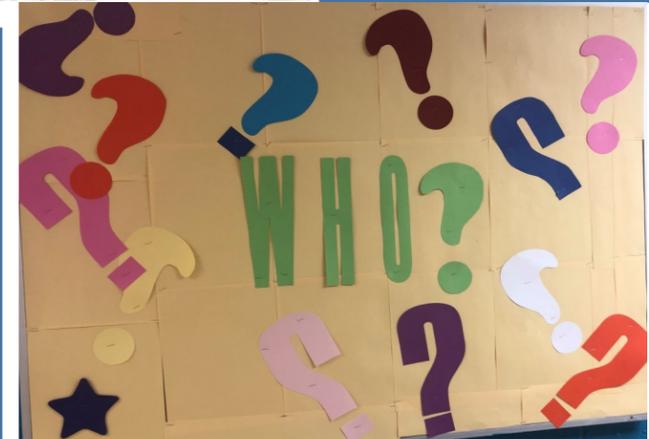
The first coffee cup made in the office was this cup for Ms. Annie! It was received with great joy and appreciation. Once again, Lauryn made someone else feel special. Thanks Lauryn!



Ms. Annie and Lauryn
It's so great to be able to mentor a young person like Lauryn who is receptive to learning and growing. Lauryn's smile and her quiet laugh makes everyone's day better.



What is Lauryn making now? Her question mark is just a part of the bulletin board for the upcoming team challenge! WHO will be the winner? Dance? Drums? Or Visual Artists? Stay tuned!



Organization at ACH is a must. To ensure that each student is in the correct space, Lauryn created these signs which were placed on the doors of the specific areas. The versatility of Lauryn's talent is evidenced by this art work she created on her iPad!