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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Saratoga Bridges receives an Adirondack Trust Company Community Fund grant

Saratoga Bridges received a \$2,000 grant to provide recreational opportunities for the people they support. Saratoga Bridges (The Saratoga County Chapter of NYSARC, Inc.) will be using the grant for their Creative Endeavors' "Breaking Down Barriers through Art" program. In particular, they will be purchasing supplies and materials (such as brushes, canvases, paper, paint, frames and pastels) as well as supporting salaries for professional artists.

"Breaking Down Barriers through Art" encompasses different classes held for individuals with disabilities held at their Creative Endeavors Arts Center in Ballston Spa. They provide opportunities for people who attend their 12 Day Programs as they work on different themes, processes and various mediums including painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, woodworking, printing and embossing taught by local professional artists. The benefits of their individuals learning from professional local artists are to increase capabilities, augment overall skills, advance self-confidence and improve communication abilities. The artwork presents an outlet for emitting emotions that are otherwise difficult to verbalize. When artists display their pieces in craft fairs or exhibits, they love to talk about their pieces and are ecstatic when they make a sale. As an agency, Saratoga Bridges is able to increase awareness of the artists' talents, which ultimately promotes positive perceptions of people with disabilities.

"Breaking Down Barriers through Art" also incorporates giving children creative experiences. Artists and their staff members from Creative Endeavors collaborate with community centers, Saratoga Springs Children's Museum, Franklin Community Center's Project Lift, YMCA, area schools and the agency's Family Support Program to teach papermaking classes. The benefits to children are that they can partake in fun, rewarding and enjoyable classes while providing their individuals

the opportunity to showcase their talents and boosting their self-esteem. These classes increase awareness of Creative Endeavors and allow the artists a chance to give back to the community.

Another aspect of "Breaking Down Barriers through Art" will be to offer adult workshops at Creative Endeavors. The workshops will be taught by the artists and facilitated by our staff members. The projected audience is comprised of shoppers who come to the Gift Shop at Creative Endeavors, adults who attend First Friday events and people who have expressed an interest in taking a class. The benefits will be to promote positive perceptions of their artists by offering creative experiences in an integrated setting for people with and without disabilities. The intent is for them to discover and develop untapped talents, gain an avenue in which to express themselves and have an opportunity to share their artistic interests. By interacting in this way, community participants will have a heightened awareness of their individuals' skills and abilities. Most importantly, the arts have the ability to equalize the playing field so that people with significant disabilities can participate at varying degrees.

"Breaking Down Barriers through Art" background

In 2004, a small group of individuals wanted to explore the fine arts. They began painting and drawing which resulted in discovering untapped creative potential. Saratoga Bridges soon recognized the importance of having art opportunities and decided to step outside their conventional way of providing services. They began looking for a larger space to expand the program. In 2007, Creative Endeavors Arts Center opened in Ballston Spa and was designed to truly be an integrated community art destination. Since then, there have been many success stories that have met several long-term strategic goals of expanding and diversifying services. Their intention is to capitalize on this momentum by providing a multifaceted program entitled "Breaking Down Barriers through Art".

As one of the largest non-profit organizations in Saratoga County, Saratoga Bridges has been proudly providing the highest level of services and programs to people with developmental disabilities and their families for more than 55 years by promoting their abilities and achievements in every aspect of community life. Throughout their history, family members, staff and volunteers have been committed to ensuring that the individuals they serve are able to realize their goals, hopes and aspirations as they work, volunteer, socialize and recreate while leading full, productive and contributing lives. The agency employs close to 600 conscientious people who work diligently and with great compassion to be responsible for the 24/7 care of over 800 individuals. Saratoga Bridges' philosophy is that every day is full of possibilities!

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Saratoga Bridges, NYSARC, Inc. Saratoga County Chapter

