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REGAN LINTON

An actor, director, educator and writer, Regan Linton is also artistic director and acting executive director of Phamaly Theatre Company in Denver. She was recently honored with the True West award for Colorado Theatre Person of the Year 2017. She has performed professionally with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mixed Blood, La Jolla Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, Big-I, and Phamaly, among others. She is a leading voice for diversity and inclusion throughout the national theater community. She is also an adaptive swimmer, golfer and yogi, and enjoys traveling, new adventures and challenging the status quo. Visit her website at reganlinton.com.



MARK MATHEW BRAUNSTEIN

Mark Mathew Braunstein became a T12 paraplegic from an unskillful dive in 1990. Lucky him, his injury and recovery were made into a short TV documentary (youtu.be/96EhHzN6RoI). After 30 years as an art librarian and art curator at Rhode Island School of Design and then at Connecticut College, he retired to contemplate his navel as well as other people's art and literature. A frequently published photographer, he is shown here photographing the ramp at Vermont Studio Center. You can view his nature photography and read his eight previous articles for NEW MOBILITY at MarkBraunstein.org



CINDY OTIS

Cindy Otis served with distinction as a CIA security analyst and manager between 2007-2017 on some of the top U.S. national security priorities, including a tour as an intelligence briefer at the White House. Prior to the CIA, she worked as a public affairs officer for the U.S. Army. Since leaving the federal government, she has written on important political and national security issues in publications like *The New York Times* and *Teen Vogue*. She holds a master's in international relations from Boston University and a bachelor's in international politics from Brigham Young University.



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 Want to contribute to NEW MOBILITY? Please send queries and manuscripts to Ian Ruder: iruder@unitedspinal.org



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ARTISTS & Writers WANTED

BY MARK MATHEW BRAUNSTEIN

What if I told you there's a resort that honors artists and writers with free vacations of room, board, and studio space? And that, at this resort, preference is given to artists and writers with disabilities — and not just any old vanilla-flavored disability, but specifically spinal cord injuries?

Welcome to Creative Access.

What started in 2008 as a partnership between an artists residency center and a foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries has grown into a sprawling, multi-site opportunity unlike any other.

Last year I was one of 13 lucky crips who were awarded Creative Access fellowships. The fellowships entail an extended

stay, usually one month, to pursue your own artistic endeavors at one of four unique residency sites across the country. They are like art schools without final grades or summer camps without counselors. Think of these colonies as Creativity Camps.

With locations in Vermont, Oregon, New Mexico and Illinois, the sites are almost as diverse as the applicants. Last year's fellows included painters, sculptors, filmmakers, writers and much more, all united by the fact that they had some sort of spinal cord injury. That's one of the prerequisites set by the provider of the fellowships, the Craig H. Nielsen Foundation: Creative Access awards are for visual artists and writers living with spinal cord injury in the United States and Canada.

At all four sites, your bedroom, your bathroom, and all public

"The quest for inspiration and productivity is what brought everyone together."



reveca torres

Fashion designer, illustrator, photographer, filmmaker and nonprofit founder Reveca Torres's resume is nearly as long as her passion for the arts is deep. Torres, a C5-7 quad, co-directs the annual ReelAbilities Film Festival in Chicago and curated an online photo exhibition that showcases the lives and work of people with disabilities. She attended Vermont Studio Center in 2014 and Santa Fe Art Institute in 2017.

places are wheelchair accessible, else they would not have invited you. Accessibility for all of us was good, but not perfect. Not that we expected perfection. If we wanted perfection, we would have stayed home. We all were glad that we did not stay home.

All the staff have already been well broken-in from hosting wheelers before us. Hence, they are knowledgeable and welcoming. And the staff are themselves artists or writers. Hence, they share camaraderie with those who are mutually afflicted by artistic callings.

While some events calendars might be tagged with studio visits, poetry readings, lectures, workshops, critiques, rap sessions, social gatherings, and even yoga classes, these are all optional. Freed from the shackles of job responsibilities and family obligations, you can fritter away your time in any way you please.



javier flores

Javier Flores was awarded a master of fine arts in printmaking. But don't let that diploma fool you. A T12 para, Javier also paints, sculpts and makes ceramics. Some of his artwork is blatantly political, and some more subtly immersed with symbolism. He did his fellowship at Playa right after completing his degree and used his time to paint and create multicolor woodcut reliefs. He says his residency provided him with the opportunity to devote time to his artwork without distractions.

Dinner at the elegant Ragdale facility, located near Chicago, is a time for the community to reconnect and relax.



Yet as a 67-year-old retiree whose every day already is a vacation day, I accomplish much more living alone at home with deep woods just 50 feet beyond my window than I did in the middle of a Vermont village with the commotion of companionship and community all around me. Writing, after all, is a solitary act. Still, my time there was productive, just not as I had planned. That happened to many others, too, who laid plans to do one thing but accomplished another. Thrust into a totally new environment as though we had dropped from the sky, we hatched some new eggs.

The quest for inspiration and productivity is what brought everyone together. After all, at home few artists enjoy the luxury of a bright and spacious and well-ventilated studio with empty walls begging to be filled. So in their separate artist or writer studios, residents create their latest masterpieces, all the while enjoying the comforts of sharing up to three meals a day, of being allocated unhurried and unscheduled time, and maybe, just maybe, of being instilled with inspiration to last a lifetime.

During several hour-long gatherings, residents were invited to give ten-minute slideshows or readings to the VSC community. During each of those artistic and literary "happy hours,"

you got to see or hear the works of your peers who you had been meeting around campus. And you, too, got your chance to condense your entire oeuvre into ten minutes. I am proud to say that I limited mine in nine.

Other evening events were the two-hour Open Studio visits that alternated between painters' studios one week, sculptors' the next week, and so on. Hobbling along on my crutches, I did not try to keep up with the Open Studio parade. Instead, I made studio visits on my own, at my own pace. All are accessible except for the second floor of the sculpture studios. Some visits I arranged in advance, others were by happenstance. If at work in their studios with their doors closed, that signified, Do Not Disturb. But open doors meant, Come On In. The studio hosts got to verbalize the artistic itch they were scratching, and I got to accost them with my unsolicited but nevertheless welcomed critiques. Those intimate one-on-one conversations were the most indelible memories of my entire Creative Access experience.

Ready to Apply for 2019?

Applications will be accepted beginning in September 2018. For the precise date, consult the Creative Access webpages on the



tony boatright

Tony Boatright chose Santa Fe Arts Institute for its summery climate in September and in order to research his historical novel set in 19th-century frontier New Mexico. A C5-6 quad and a professional writer, Boatright has been a content copywriter, copyeditor, ghostwriter, blogger, e-book author, restaurant reviewer, ADA consultant and more. Now in his 60s, he balances commerce with creativity by writing novels and Sci-Fi. "My time at the Santa Fe Arts Institute was an experience that stretched my mind," he says.



catherine peteron

Using crystals, beads, and gems, and drawing on her love of Mexican traditions, including the Day of the Dead, Catherine Peterson creates what she calls "skulptures" — essentially painted and decorated animal skulls. A T12 para, Catherine found Vermont Studio Center a very supportive and engaging community. Her time there allowed her to think outside the box of her art and to see how others tried new techniques even if theirs ended in failure. "I now feel I can experiment with new mediums without necessarily achieving success with them."



Alliance of Artists Communities website at artistcommunities.org/creativeaccess/apply. And remember, even if you are not awarded a fellowship, you can still attend on your own dime. If this article generates a flood of applicants for 2019, don't despair. An overwhelming response would only confirm the need to renew and expand the program into 2020 and beyond. ■■

Resources

- Creative Access, 401/351-4320; artistcommunities.org/creativeaccess
- Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, 818/925-1245; chnfoundation.org
- Playa in Summerlake, Oregon, 541/943-3983; playasummerlake.org
- Ragdale Foundation in Lake Forest, Illinois, 847/234-1063; ragdale.org
- Santa Fe Art Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico, 505/424-5050; sfai.org/residencies
- Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont, 802/635-2727; vermontstudiocenter.org



elizabeth sachs

A failed T1 spinal surgery at 65 made Elizabeth Sachs a latecomer to the SCI world, but did little to slow her creative momentum. A journalist, editor, New York Times book reviewer and children's and young adult author (pen name Betsy Sachs), Sachs now writes about her disability. Look for her forthcoming memoir, *Late to the Dance*. Her residency at VSC demonstrated just how nurturing fellowships can be, "It allowed me to gather a disjointed manuscript representing 40 years of writing into a cohesive story."

PLAYA



Summer Lake, Oregon

Setting: Resort ranch isolated in a remote hinterland

Artists in Residence/Session: 8-12

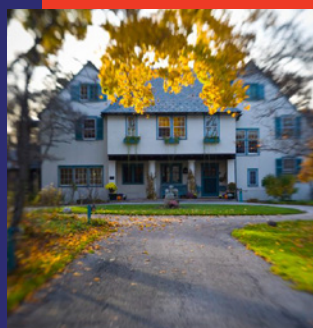
Approx CA Fellows/Year: 3

Food Provided: 2 Dinners per week

Tools Provided: Basic hand & handheld power tools

Notes: Newest site to partner with Creative Access; retreat with few outside distractions

RAGDALE FOUNDATION



Lake Forest, Illinois

Setting: Mansion on a secluded estate in a suburb of Chicago

Artists in Residence/Session: 13

Approx CA Fellows/Year: 3

Food Provided: Dinner daily, and some staples for breakfast & lunch

Tools Provided: None

Notes: The most elegant of the four sites; short commute to Chicago

SANTA FE ART INSTITUTE



Santa Fe, New Mexico

Setting: On another college's campus within an urban environment

Artists in Residence/Session: 8-10

Approx CA Fellows/Year: 3

Food Provided: Some breakfast staples

Tools Provided: Hand tools, fee-based access to off-campus woodshop and computer lab

Notes: Though in a culturally vibrant city, nothing else is within rolling distance

VERMONT STUDIO CENTER



Johnson, Vermont

Setting: Storybook village in the Green Mountains

Artists in Residence/Session: 55

Approx CA Fellows/Year: 6-8

Food Provided: 3 full meals daily

Tools Provided: Wood & metalwork shops, ceramics studio, printmaking studio, photo darkrooms, digital photo printer, printers for writers

Notes: Art store, supermarket, post office, eateries are all within rolling distance