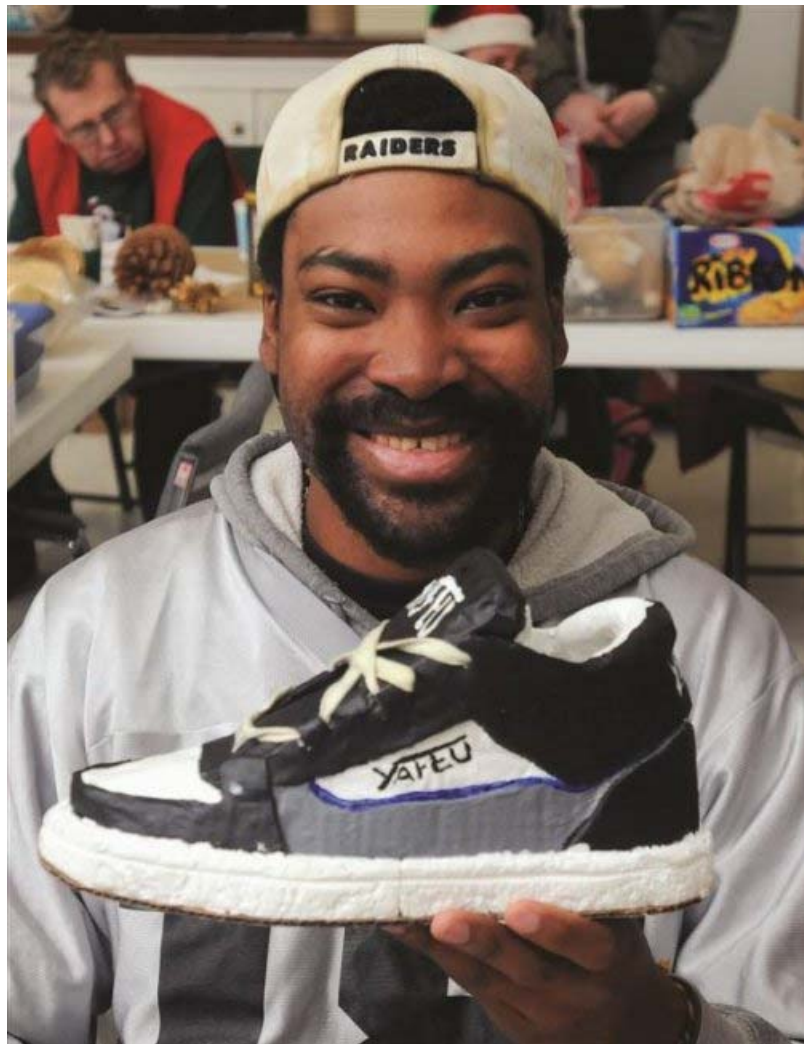


Placer ARC

Making Strides for Those with Special Needs

BY JENN THORNTON



PHOTOS BY DANTE FONTANA

As the local, regional, national and global population grows and lives longer, the demand to keep pace with an array of services that meet the needs of a diverse populous also increases with logistical challenges and financial needs galore.

In 2012, this is not a revelation nor is it news, exactly. What is a surprise, though, is the work that the non-profit Placer ARC has steadily performed on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1962 – at a time when they were grossly underserved and marginalized by wider society.

First formed in Placer County by parents of developmentally disabled children, the once improbable nonprofit is something of a small miracle given its longevity and the scope of its programs, the first of which saw operation in 1964. Now one of the nation's oldest and most persevering non profits, Placer ARC is a pioneer still blazing trails. Locally, its frontier extends into all areas of well-being – from personal care and health to higher education and vocational guidance among other services.



Placer ARC's five growth-promoting programs function under one impressive umbrella. Rigorously regulated and licensed, these include the Roseville Adult Center and Studio 700 Center for the Arts (also in Roseville); the Adult Achievement Center in Meadow Vista; social immersion programs On The Go! and On The Go! Youth, offered to those throughout Placer County and surrounding areas; and Avenues Independent Living Services, an in-home support program for agency clients living on their own within the region's Western Slope. All programs serve both young and older adults, whom case managers from Alta California Regional Center refer. They are, however, as unique, and uniquely gifted, as those they benefit.

"While some individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities may understand and interact with the world differently than some, they can contribute if given a chance," explains Executive Director Barbara Guenther. "The best way to dispel stereotypes is through association. Once a member of the community interacts with an individual with a developmental disability in a meaningful way over time, that individual is viewed as just another person, maybe even a friend."



As Placer ARC marches through these difficult economic times, it does so with its primary objective – to improve and enrich the lives of its clients – intact. This is especially evident at Studio 700, where the quality and breadth of client work being performed astounds just about everyone who pops in. “Our artists are learning everything from painting to sculpture, from wearable art to clothing and fashion design, from graphic arts to 3D digital animation,” Guenther says. “It’s not just that the art is impressive, it’s also practical in terms of creating supplemental income.” This includes art show sales, local gallery appearances, and a recently commissioned project doing cards, letterhead and logo design for a local business.

Support Placer ARC by attending one of its upcoming fundraisers or by volunteering. Community members 18 years and older who have taken a TB test and received fingerprint clearance are welcome.

For more information, visit placerc.org.