



ART · REACH

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Full Circle, Full Voice A Student's Success Story



Mary Altamuro gives back to her community after gaining cultural experiences in grade school through Art-Reach.

Mary Altamuro first became familiar with Art-Reach as an elementary school student at Saint Mary Interparochial School. A longtime member of Art-Reach, the school gave cultural opportunities to Mary that she still fondly recalls: “I remember we made jugs with faces on them. In fact, I still have mine. We also used to go to different shows; one of my favorites was Porgy and Bess. I’ve always been into art, and it was fun to see things you don’t normally get to do during school and cannot see by watching TV.”

Now attending high school, Mary is enrolled with Science Leadership Academy and takes part in Art-Reach’s Ambassador Program volunteering as an Independent Study Ambassador. Mary assists the staff with various clerical responsibilities, website projects and special events including the annual Jazz Brunch. Given the opportunity to work with Art-Reach, Mary pursued it because she liked the organization’s mission and recalled the impact she had felt personally.

“I thought it would be fun to be behind the scenes, and this organization is built on a foundation of a really good cause that is out to help people,” she explains. “They helped me.”

Mary has gone from receiving Art-Reach services to helping the organization reach more new audiences, and now, coming full circle, she is becoming an artist in her own right. Last month, Mary authored a monologue that was recognized with a first-place standing by InterAct Theatre Company and Philadelphia Young Playwrights. Her work, about a principal’s first day on the job, will be among 20 presented and produced professionally in April.

“If you’ve ever heard your words spoken, it is a really big piece of you out there for everyone to see and it can be scary,” Mary comments. But she is bravely embracing the experience and learning a lot in the process. “Yesterday we worked on my piece, and I heard the actor read it for the first time,” she recalls with a modest smile on her face. “It was a dry read, and I will be doing more editing and then rehearsing it again to get it just right. I’ve learned that nothing is ever finished, because I’ve been changing so many things in the piece. Now it is a whole different monologue with the same base of ideas. You can never edit enough; there is always improvement.”

Though quiet, Mary is well spoken and exudes a spirit that shouts she is ready for whatever comes her way. Sharing that this experience was like none she’d ever encountered before, Mary proclaims, “The future is wide open, and there are so many options.”

Art-Reach takes pride in Mary’s accomplishments and the small role we have had in nourishing her appreciation for the arts, and we look forward to watching her continue to flourish. Mary’s monologue will be presented at InterAct Theatre on April 15th, 16th and 17th at 11:00 a.m.