

A Vegetable Paradise in Camden, Amazonian Flying Rainbows, and a Giraffe from South Africa Made of Orchids

If you are a volunteer with Art-Reach, you may get lucky and get to travel around the world (yes – this is a shameless plug for volunteering at Art-Reach with the [Ambassador Program!](#)) with some fabulous people.

Early in March, I got lucky, and went to India, South Africa, the Netherlands, Germany, Singapore, Brazil, and Camden, New Jersey, with Jordie, Tara, and Marc, three awesome students from the [HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy](#), located in University City. Accompanying us were their three indefatigable recreational therapists, Charlie, Rich, and Karen.



HMS students in front of 28-foot-tall hot-air balloon that greeted guests as they entered the event.

We did this in 90 minutes flat. How, you ask? Art-Reach and the [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#) (PHS) made our trip possible by arranging tickets to attend the 2010 Philadelphia International Flower Show, the world's largest indoor flower show that showcased, well, the world! In fact, PHS has been an Art-Reach arts partner for a number of years, annually pledging tickets that enable community access to their event. In turn, Art-Reach manages all community outreach for PHS. "Through their (PHS) partnership, we were able to provide experiences to more than 270 people who would not otherwise be able to access the flower show," explains Stephanie Borton, Art-Reach Associate Director.



PHS runs the world's largest indoor flower show, and this year they showcased 79,000 freeze-dried flowers on the 28-foot-tall hot-air balloon that greeted guests upon their entrance to the event. Charlie stated that "Art-Reach gives our students many more opportunities to explore and experience the community." And in this case, the world! "We also want the community at large to be socially aware of young adults with disabilities," he explained.



We saw a 12 foot tall, life-size pastel floral elephant from India; tulips, tulips, and more tulips from the Netherlands; and ethereal white calla lilies suspended in blocks of “ice” dangling from the ceiling in an urban, post-apocalyptic setting. Very post-modern, and much to the taste and delight of Tara!



Jordie maneuvered her wheelchair so adroitly through the crowds, anxious to get to each more spectacular-than-the last exhibit, that Charlie had a hard time catching up with her. Meanwhile, Marc, with a winning smile, posed in front of the German Beer Garden and raised his water cup in a hearty Prost!



Tara summed up her globe-trotting experience by telling me, via her augmentative communication device, “I am happy to be at the Flower Show. There are so many pretty flowers! Thank you for the tickets.”



I later asked both Bill Hunter, Recreation Coordinator at the HMS School, and Laura Hoover, Senior Public Relations Coordinator of the PHS, about the advantages of being a member and an arts partner of Art-Reach, respectively.

In addition to providing HMS students with opportunities to visit museums and attend the theater, Bill stressed the proactive approach of Art-Reach's staff in extending invitations to students and their parents and caregivers for cultural events that they normally would not have a chance to experience.

But given our "new economy," I think Laura succinctly summed up a most relevant reason for social service agencies and arts and culture non-profits to partner with Art-Reach.

While the staff provides "excellent support and customer service" and outsourcing outreach to Art-Reach is "a great help to the Public Relations Department (of PHS)," the bottom line for any organization to be a member of Art-Reach is the bottom line: "Art-Reach will save you time and money," explains Laura.

-by Kathy Spillman

Kathy is a [Special Projects Ambassador](#) with Art-Reach