

Celebrating the Very Special Arts of New York City Public School Students

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The Very Special Arts (VSA), New York City public schools in District 75 and Marquis Studios celebrated the Mural and Calendar Project by presenting an exhibition of twenty-one murals by District 75 special needs students on Tuesday, October 8th from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm, Columbia University, Kolb Annex, 40 Haven Avenue, Washington Heights, via subway: 1, A or C train to 168th Street.

This year's theme is New York City: Current and Future. Special needs students from District 75 created the murals, along with district art teachers and Marquis Studios teaching artists, which are featured in a calendar and will be on exhibit until November 8th. VSA Founder Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith will present awards to special needs students and art teachers recognizing their work in the project. The event, featuring live music, refreshments, and a hands-on art activity for parents and children, is free and open to the general public.

Ambassador Kennedy Smith, sister to John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Ted Kennedy, founded Very Special Arts 37 years ago as a part of the Kennedy Center's effort to provide opportunities for children, youth, and adults living with disabilities to learn through and participate in the arts. Marquis Studios was named the new Very Special Arts New York City (VSA-NYC) program affiliate in August of 2013. The Studio is a 37-year old nonprofit organization providing arts-in-education services to New York City public schools.

This year's program will have remarks by mural and calendar project supporters: David Marquis, Executive Director, VSA-NYC and Marquis Studios; Dr. Jeffrey Lieberman, the Lawrence C. Kolb Professor and Chairman of Psychiatry at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons; Dr. Robert Klitzman, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry (in Sociomedical Sciences) and Director of the Bioethics Program at Columbia University; Gary Hecht, Superintendent of Special Education, District 75, New York City; Barbara Joseph, Deputy Superintendent of Special Education, District 75, New York City; and Mrs. Lauren Micheline- Teacher, P255Q@158Q.

The mural project is a model as to how art changes lives. "The student artists from Special Education District 75 schools who participated in the VSA New York City Murals Project and are represented in this exhibition are a testament to the fact that art is not a luxury. Art is central to what makes us fully human. Through art, these students have beautifully expressed their thoughts and captured the energy that is New York City," notes Ambassador Kennedy Smith. For more information on the event or to RSVP, contact vsainfo@kennedy-center.org

