

40 Years of Arts & Smarts by Amy Rich

Every so often, someone appears at Patchwork, and they linger a little longer than usual while looking around the building. Or we'll see them posing their child for a photo on the Welcome Matt sculpture in Patchwork's front yard. Or we'll overhear them as they point to a portrait on Patchwork's wall and ask their friend, "You remember her? We used to go here when we were kids."

And then we realize that, yes, we recognize the person—or we recognize hints of the little fifth grader who was a participant in the Arts & Smarts program 20 years ago. And it's a wonderful feeling to see that they're doing well and that they're happy. They're a parent. They're a business owner. And they're back to visit this place and these people who were special to them when they were kids.



This spring we made connections with three such children-turned-adults. It's a valued reminder of why we do what we do. It's a reminder that everything we do for kids at Patchwork makes a difference. The relationships built, the interests nurtured, the special projects, the protective spaces, the moments large and small.



And Patchwork has been doing this for 40 years. It's something really special and something to celebrate. It's a level of stability and dedication to families that few in our area can duplicate. Children grow into adults who know that the folks at Patchwork are here for them and care about them always. Our participants grow up and bring their children to Patchwork and their grandchildren.

But we're not stopping there! Right now, we're building more of these special moments with a new generation of kids. They're working on homework with supervision from adults. They're mixing colors and painting big paintings on easels. They're learning how to knit headbands using looms. They're creating a "storytelling in the round" project in which each participant contributes one sentence of a story that gets wilder and more unbelievable as things go on. They're creating "galaxy glitter jars" filled with glittering ooze.



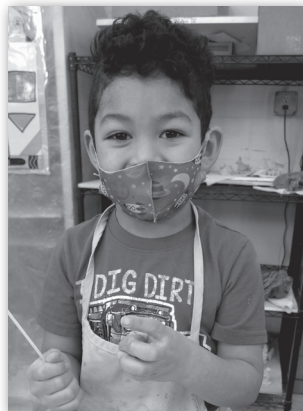
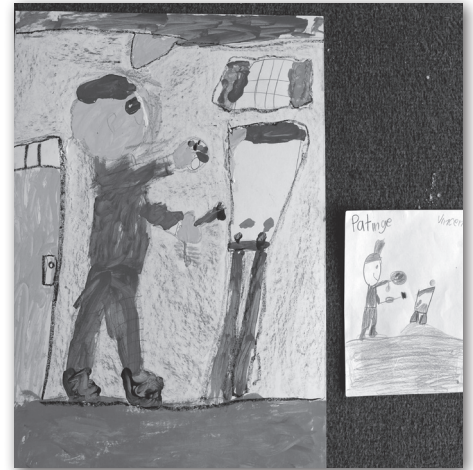
And we're talking about their Sparks. Sparks are the things that someone loves to do, that bring joy, and that make someone feel like their best self. Sparks are things like painting, taking care of cats, caring for other people, playing sports, playing guitar, or dancing. We spend time talking about Sparks because research shows that youth are more likely to thrive when they have identified their Sparks, when they have adults who know and support those Sparks, and when they see how their Sparks can help other people.

This spring, our Arts & Smarts participants have been drawing then painting self-portraits of themselves demonstrating their Sparks. The self-portrait project is based on a book called *Jamaica Louise James* that we've used as inspiration for the past year. The book is about an 8-year-old girl who uses her Spark, painting, to spread joy to her neighborhood by painting portraits of her neighbors and by hanging the portraits where everyone can see them.

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40 Years *(continued)*

Eventually, our Arts & Smarts participants' designs will be transferred to one of Patchwork's sheds to create a mural that celebrates each youth and their contributions to the Arts & Smarts Program. Through their public artwork, our Arts & Smarts participants will bring joy and beauty to our neighborhood. The artwork can also help to inspire the participants themselves as they get older and think about the images of their younger selves doing what they love at Patchwork.



In recent weeks, one new participant walked up to Jane at the end of his first day and said, "I love it here."

Maybe he'll be the one walking into the main office in 20 years just to see how we're all doing and to tell us about the things he's accomplished.

Our Garden is Abuzz

Patchwork's garden has been buzzing this spring, and it hasn't only been because of the pollinators buzzing around the blossoms in the redbud, sassafras, apple, and plum trees. The Southwestern Indiana Master Gardeners have been hard at work constructing four new raised beds for us to use with the kids in the Arts & Smarts Program. Funding for the materials came from Evansville Downtown Optimists' Foundation.

The raised beds are the latest development for our garden plot where all sorts of plants have been nurtured since 1995 when Bill Hemminger first turned a compacted, empty lot into a lush, meditative garden space. Thanks to Patchwork's garden, generations of kids have sampled fresh vegetables and fruits like lettuce, onions, potatoes, plums, blackberries, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes. They've learned to cook using the plants that they grew themselves. And, our neighbors have harvested garden produce for themselves.

The Master Gardeners working on the raised bed project have moved tons of concrete blocks, sand, soil, and mulch to create the new planting areas. The concrete blocks are set on sand-filled trenches and filled with soil. Our Arts & Smarts participants helped to add some of the soil to the beds, too. They'll get to plant, grow, and harvest more this summer and into the fall.

We're looking forward to using our new raised beds, and we're grateful for all the work that the Master Gardeners have put into creating them!



Patchwork's Bike Shop: Rolling Along

"You been riding your bike lately? It's been nice outside. Riding bike is my therapy, man," said one of our friends this week as a group sat in Patchwork's front courtyard, drinking coffee and chatting.

There's a lot that riding a bike can do. It can bring freedom and peace of mind. It can provide a way to get across town. It can help someone find a job or to keep one. It can allow someone who doesn't own a car to control when and where they're traveling and at a pace that's faster than walking.

Access to safe, working bicycles to use for transportation is important for many people in our community, but for those living near Patchwork, access to parts, tools, and knowledgeable repairmen is difficult to find. That's what makes Patchwork's Bike Shop an important resource.

Pete Emery has coordinated our Bike Shop for many years. He reports:

The Patchwork Bicycle Shop continues to be an urban volunteer ministry that refurbishes donated bicycles and provides them to people in the community who have no other transportation. We also provide repair services for bicycles that are brought into the shop with a problem or problems that make the bicycle unrideable, hard to ride, or unsafe to ride.

Repair service is provided 8:30-12 noon each Tuesday and Thursday morning, weather and shop resourcing permitting.

At 9 am on the first Tuesday morning of every month, refurbished bicycles are distributed to those in need of one. This means of distribution began in February when 18 bicycles were distributed to happy riders. Six bicycles were distributed in March. In both cases, everyone needing a bicycle got one.

On bicycle distribution days, those interested in a bike were asked to arrive before 9am to sign up for a bicycle. The signup list was used to determine the order of distribution. As such, the first person on the list was provided a choice of any of the available refurbished bicycles. Once a choice was made, the individual was asked to sign a waiver and was happily on their way. The next person on the list had the choice of the remaining bicycles, and so on. The shop remained open the balance of the morning for any needed or desired adjustments.

Although refurbished bicycles are now only available for distribution once a month, the process provides choice for our customers and eliminates the need to check on bicycle availability multiple times. It also provides more time for the mechanics to refurbish donated bicycles.

We have currently depleted our supply of donated bicycles to refurbish and are in need of new donations. We prefer bicycles in reasonable condition in sizes 24" and above. We do not refurbish smaller children's bicycles and do not stock repair parts. Demand is primarily for adult-sized bicycles. If you have a bike to donate, please bring it to Patchwork Mon-Thurs between 9 am-11:45 am.

We are unable to provide accessories such as locks, lock cables, lights, etc. When a donated bike is equipped with such an accessory, it is passed on to the person who receives the bicycle.

We also depend on cash donations so repair parts and tools can be purchased, and we thank the Evansville Bicycle Club for their ongoing support.

We look forward to continued community support with this Bicycle Ministry!



Hospitality: Visits With Friends

Patchwork's Neighborhood Hospitality is all about being here to chat. It's about saying hello and having time to talk. It's about being here to check on old friends. It's about a good cup of coffee and time to vent. It's about telling tall tales and laughing together. It's even about meeting the neighborhood's famous Amazon parrot Midler (pictured here eating Goldfish crackers on Mary's shoulder).

Through conversation, someone may mention that they have an ongoing health concern that they haven't been able to get adequately addressed by their doctor, so John and Mary offer their assistance as part of the Sozo Health Ministry. Or maybe someone could use some fresh salad mix, potatoes, or oranges from the food pantry, so one of our Hospitality volunteers puts the produce together and brings it out to them. Or maybe someone needs to connect with another agency, so they chat with Shawn in the main office, and she helps them make some phone calls.



Our Neighborhood Hospitality continues to change and adjust to COVID-safety protocols. For the last nine months, almost all of our Hospitality activities have taken place outdoors on Patchwork's front lawn in order to help with distancing and air flow. After much discussion and research, and with local COVID rates at very low levels, we recently decided to offer showers once again. The showers are available by appointment only, and currently there is a limit of three men's and three women's showers per day so we have time to sanitize in between each shower.



Shawn reports from the Main Office that:

Since this is a recent development, not many people are aware of our reopening showers so we've only had a few so far. A slow reopening is preferred so that we are able to work through all the details as we go. We are able to provide towels, washcloths, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, lotion, razors, etc. to those who need them. One of our regulars who has been asking about showers for months was very thankful that he was the first one to take a shower after a year of having them closed due to COVID. We are taking small steps and doing the best we can to provide services for our neighbors while also keeping one another safe and healthy. Reinventing Hospitality has been a challenge, but it has been well worth it, and I'm proud of how we have all adapted (Patchwork staff, volunteers and visiting neighbors)!

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Helen Belleville: October 10, 1927 - March 22, 2021

Helen Belleville began volunteering at Patchwork Central in the mid-1990's after having had a long career that included serving in Japan as a nurse in the US Army, working as a public health nurse, and teaching K-12 art for more than 20 years in Mount Vernon, Indiana. She soon became a daily presence in our Arts & Smarts Children's Program.

Helen continued as an Arts & Smarts volunteer for 14 years, adding much to the art program. Her influence and generosity can still be found in the art projects we do every day. When she was no longer able to regularly volunteer, Helen still visited as an occasional volunteer and an ongoing supporter of the children. She never missed an Arts & Smarts Program celebration.



Helen was a kind and generous person. She was also intelligent and creative. She did much to encourage others to be artists and art teachers, and she was part of many efforts to create nurturing spaces for children. She touched many people's lives during her well-lived and long life.



Photo by Calvin Kimbrough

Hospitality (continued)

Two of our good friends and regulars suffered from strokes this past month. Thankfully, they were able to get to the hospital and get the treatment they needed in order to limit the severity of the stroke. They both come here each week to discuss their healing with John and Mary and to have their blood pressures checked. One of the gentlemen told me Patchwork was his home away from home. He lives alone and has always enjoyed the fellowship of Patchwork, but after his stroke he says Patchwork is a place he can come and not feel so alone. He says in this meeting place he feels comforted by the care and concern he is shown and how everyone here reaches out to help him. He said Patchwork makes him feel loved.

We are grateful for all our interns and volunteers who keep things running smoothly on a daily basis and for the ways they welcome and interact with everyone who visits our building. They are all willing to step up and help out wherever they are needed and that is indeed a blessing.

E-Newsletter

More Stories! More Photos! More News!

Sign up for our bi-weekly e-newsletter! You will receive email updates highlighting the most recent happenings at Patchwork.

Simply visit our website, www.Patchwork.org, and click the "join our mailing list" link!

Bequests

The next time you update your will, please consider adding Patchwork Central, Inc. as a beneficiary. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Patchwork is eligible to receive donations from bequests. Any size of gift makes a big difference in providing for our programming and contributing to our long-term stability.

Sunday Worship

During this time of social distancing, the Patchwork Community is meeting for virtual worship on Patchwork Central's Facebook page every **Sunday at 5:15 p.m.** Worship is led by volunteers and changes every week. You are welcome to join us!



Patchwork Central, Inc.

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MISSION STATEMENT

Patchwork Central creates community, honors personal dignity, empowers people, and encourages spiritual and social growth through its program and hospitality, its opportunities for learning, its creative atmosphere and cultivation of the arts, and its work toward reconciliation and a more peaceful and just world.

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