



**ACTING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES  
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

**AWB**



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### **OUR MISSION**

Acting Without  
Boundaries (AWB) aims  
to transform lives and  
build self-esteem in an  
empowered community  
of people with physical  
disabilities through theater  
that celebrates ability.



## Dear Friends,

I am very proud of Acting Without Boundaries and all of our accomplishments during this past year and I greatly appreciate you taking the time to read about these triumphs in our Annual Report. A big shout out to the AWB staff and Board of Directors who have helped make our programs such as a success despite the pandemic. We continued with virtual programming and were also able to hold some in-person programs and events throughout the year. AWB continued video projects and performances this year including new Spotlight 180 videos, A Holiday Video, a Welcome to Spring performance and the AWB Juniors performance.

Since the virus continued to create uncertainty we held our monthly workshops in a fluid manner. Some were virtual, some were hybrid and others were mostly in-person with a few people joining via zoom. The hybrid workshops worked great throughout the year, and we transitioned seamlessly between platforms (virtual, in person and hybrid) as CDC protocols changed.

AWB Juniors premiered *Stone Soup*, “a love letter to Philadelphia” that was performed virtually. I would like to thank our AWB parents who were “Production Assistants” to our actors. The Melodies program brought a disability awareness program to Caskey-Torah Academy in a hybrid manner this year. I attended in person while some of our actor participants joined via zoom. One highlight this past summer was being able to hold the AWB Masters’ Program in person. We are excited to report that the Master’s Program was featured on 6-ABC in Philadelphia. We also held an in-person field trip to Longwood Gardens.

We are extremely pleased with the growth of our AWB Acting Lab program. We began a new collaboration with Main Line Health’s Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital and continued programming with Jefferson Health’s Magee Rehab Hospital and with Inglis. This year, all Acting Lab programs were held virtually and the intro classes created a final project where the actors wrote and starred in original videos.

In September, we honored Jimmy Curran a Research Analyst for IBX with the 2021 AWB Hero Award. Jimmy is a disability advocate and the author of children’s book. The event was held in-person at Water Works in Philadelphia. It was an amazing event where over \$100,000 was raised for AWB programs.

As new variants of the pandemic distanced people once again by late fall, our Seniors took to the screen rather than to the stage and gave a beautiful Holiday Video performance to ring in cheer and celebrate safely with the community.

We’ve become accustomed to adapting and adjusting our programs, and because of supporters like you, we can continue improving the lives of people with physical disabilities through the magic of the performing arts.

Gratefully,



Christine Rouse



**ACTING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES**

**AWB**

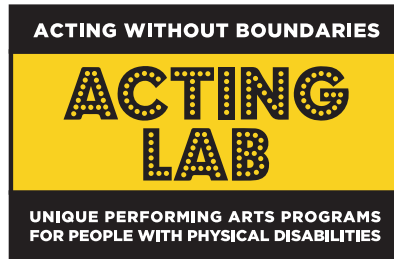
**UNIQUE PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMS  
FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**







**It makes me feel alive and energized!**



**Although our Acting Lab continued to be virtual in 2021, we were able to continue building the Acting Lab program by opening up another new partnership.**

This year our new partnership was with Main Line Health’s Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital where we were able to share the therapeutic benefits of the performing arts with new participants. We held an introductory program to teach individuals beginner theater and acting skills.

We also continued our partnership with Jefferson Health’s Magee Rehabilitation Hospital. Neil Hartley, our Artistic Director, held more advanced classes with participants at Jefferson Health’s Magee Rehabilitation for actors that had already taken part in the beginner class in 2020. Additionally we held an introductory class with Inglis for new participants from their “Connections” Day Program and folks participated via zoom.

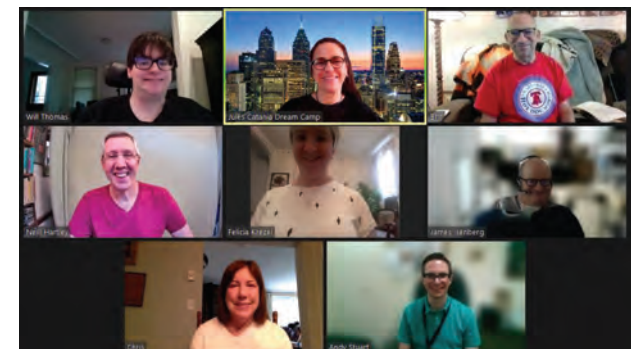
The videos created in the AWB Acting Lab programs are written and acted by the class participants. By including closed captions in the videos we hope to make them more accessible to all. For viewers who have some hearing loss or are completely deaf we want to make sure they can appreciate the stories. Therefore, we now add the words to the screen during the video editing process and before we publish to YouTube.

As a small, established non-profit committed to providing an open forum for the creative and artistic expression of children, teenagers and adults with physical disabilities, we want to share what we do with others. The goal of the Acting Lab program is to serve more individuals with physical disabilities through unique performing arts workshops. Since 2019, we have achieved this goal.



**“I really loved working at Inglis—the enthusiasm, creativity, and joy was infectious! I learned so much assisting with Jen, and I was so pleased and proud to work with such incredible performers!”**

**—HANNAH, AWB APPRENTICE**







**The Acting Without Boundaries Melodies Program allows us to fulfill the important mission of sharing what people with physical disabilities can do! It also opens conversations and facilitates a broader community awareness around people with physical disabilities.**

In 2021, the AWB Melodies program was active with both in-person and virtual programs. AWB brings awareness to our organization through the Spotlight 180 video series. In Spotlight 180 we interview our actors, staff, board members and close friends of AWB for 180 seconds, (three minutes) about the impact AWB has on their lives.

Whether they are a participant or other members of the AWB family, the Spotlight 180 videos allow the community to see the large impact that AWB has had on many individuals' lives. The actors of both AWB Sr. and AWB Jr. created a "Welcome to Spring" performance video where poems about the springtime were shared with the audience.

Over the summer the actors gathered for an in-person social outing to Longwood Gardens. In the fall Christine held an in-person disability awareness program for Caskey Torah Academy for middle school students and was supported by some of our actors who attended via Zoom. "Hybrid" programming has become a new way of life for AWB.



**"We had a great time visiting students at Caskey Torah Academy. I believe that what we did there was essential to our mission of inclusion. We need to have an open dialogue with the next generation. That's the only way to ensure change moving forward."**

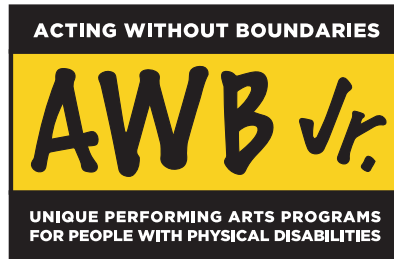
**—WILL, AWB ACTOR**







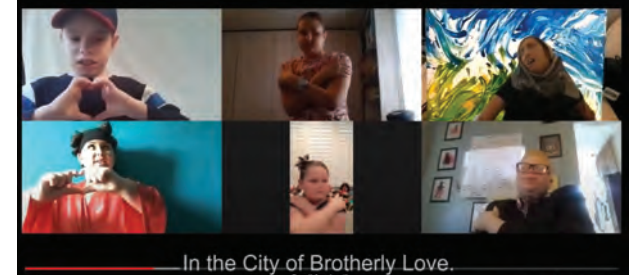




**Our junior actors showed an incredible amount of strength and resilience as they adjusted to the change in program format as the pandemic shifted again this year. We could not be prouder of our junior actors!**

The actors involved in our Junior's program are the youngest thespians at AWB. They work together with our staff to better their acting skills and build their self esteem by creating scripts, songs, and characters. We have had participants from the Juniors program with us for over 16 years, making their way into the Seniors program.

The AWB Junior's program was created in 2008, allowing actors as young as four years old to gather each month to work on an annual performance. Typically, performances are live and on the stage, but this year our actors performed via zoom and created an amazing show. Each year Maria Ceferatti, AWB Junior's Artistic Director chooses a folktale or children's story for the annual musical. This year's production was "Stone Soup". With the help of the actors, Ms. Ceferatti wrote the script and songs and set the play in a location that is close to everyone's hearts—Philadelphia! Stone Soup features original music and a witty culture-clash as the two main characters, tourists from the South, are introduced to local "Phillyisms." When in-person rehearsals had to be postponed last spring, preparations were made to rehearse and record Stone Soup via Zoom. Filming for Stone Soup began in the fall and continued into the new year. AWB proudly premiered this amazing performance in the Spring of 2021.



**“Even though it was virtual, Stone Soup was still very fun, especially because it had a hometown vibe... The City of Brotherly Love!”**

**—GIANNA, AWB JUNIORS PERFORMER**









**The Acting Without Boundaries Senior Program is a performing arts program for our actors ranging from older teens to adults. These actors work tirelessly throughout the year, meeting once a month, to practice for their show. This year our Senior Program looked a little bit different due to the pandemic, but this did not stop their greatness.**

The seniors practiced virtually on Zoom in order to put together a holiday performance on video for the community to enjoy. The Senior actors created a Holiday Show to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year! In the performance, we had virtual snow, Christmas trees, and holiday lights!

We also continued monthly workshops throughout the year preparing for our live performance in April of 2022.

We continued our TGIF socials in 2021 to allow our actors to connect virtually since the pandemic continued to prevent us from connecting in person. Every Friday at 4:30 PM, actors meet to share any big news that might have happened that week and participate in a "Question of the Week." Through the TGIF Socials, AWB hosted holiday celebrations including a Halloween costume party and winter holiday party with carol sing-alongs. Additionally, we had guest speakers who discussed different programs and performing opportunities for our actors.



**“My favorite thing is working with my fellow actors to put on a fantastic show... we were able to sustain the program on zoom for the past two years. We made so much progress in new ways and it just shows the resilience and dedication of everyone involved.”**

**—SIMON**











## The third annual Acting Without Boundaries Masters' program focused on Musical Theatre with featured guest instructor Terry Nolan the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of the Arden Theatre in Philadelphia.

The program also included instruction by Melinda Tatum Kaiser who has worked as an independent choreographer, director and educator in theatre and dance environments for more than 30 years in university, secondary, and elementary school settings. We also had our very own Neill Hartley, AWB's Artistic Director and Maria Cefferati our Musical Director and AWB Juniors Artistic Director rounding out the compliment of instructors.

Participants learned about music, dance, and song and how these elements work together to create musical theater. As an introduction to the workshop, and to improve their own acting thru song, participants studied the history of musicals and were taught how to analyze the meaning behind each song. Participants were taught dances such as ballet, square dancing, and individual dramatic expression. By using songs from the play Oklahoma, they crafted movements to portray various scenes of the well-loved play.

The mission of the AWB Master's program is to provide an immersive conservatory experience in the theatre arts. This program provides thorough and comprehensive training to obtain the skills of a professional theatre artist. Each year one discipline of the craft is chosen as the focus of the program.

The 2021 Masters' Program was featured on 6ABC Action News in Philadelphia, and you can view the segment here: <https://www.facebook.com/localish/videos/acting-without-boundaries-puts-individuals-with-disabilities-on-center-stage/2958054004522545/>



**“We were able to speak openly and voice our point of view without bias. It was a great experience. Excellent instructors, excellent training, fun to be with friends.”**

**—ERIK AND KEVIN,  
MASTERS' PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**









# THE **Devon** **Lengel** MEMORIAL AWARD

**Each year the Devon Lengel Memorial Award is given to a member of Acting Without Boundaries who shows dedication, enthusiasm, passion, and whose ambition shines onto others. This individual's brightness exemplifies the everlasting and external light that Devon Lengel brought to AWB and all other aspects of her life.**

Devon was a member of AWB from 2014 to 2018 and participated in multiple stage productions where she displayed her remarkable acting and singing skills. Devon had the most beautiful singing voice and was able to memorize her lines in an exceptional manner; her skills reflected one of a Broadway performer.

If you needed to hear a joke, Devon had ten on the tip of her tongue; if you needed to hear a song or a scene from *The Sound of Music* or *My Fair Lady*, Devon embodied the characters, complete with a spot-on cockney accent; and if you needed an example of how to relate to people with love and sincerity and unconditional joy, you just had to look at Devon. We are honored to have an award in honor of Devon. AWB is extremely grateful to have had a member like Devon Lengel in our organization and she will always be a part of our community. This year's Award went to Jackson Reid who for the past six years has been a devoted volunteer always willing to jump in anywhere he's needed to support AWB juniors.



**“The award is beautiful! Devon would be so thrilled to have her name associated with honoring someone in AWB. We are grateful for your recognition of her legacy at AWB, and in the World. We miss her so much but know she is still here with us and with her AWB family.”**

**— KIM, DEVON'S MOM**











**On Wednesday, September 22, 2021, Acting Without Boundaries held their sixth annual Hero Award at Water Works by Cescaphe in Philadelphia. This year's recipient was Jimmy Curran. Over one-hundred guests gathered for a beautiful open-air event which was the first large gathering for AWB since the pandemic. AWB was able to raise over \$100,000 from this event for AWB programs.**

The Hero Award recognizes a community leader with a physical disability who displays remarkable efforts to overcome adversity, enhance awareness, reduce stigma, and increase community access for people with physical disabilities.

Jimmy Curran is an advocate for people with disabilities and has become a role model for others with physical disabilities. Jimmy currently resides independently in Center City, Philadelphia and was born and lives with Spinal Muscular atrophy. He is a Senior Competitive Research Analyst in the Office of Strategy and Planning at Independence Blue Cross. Most recently, Jimmy was featured in a Comcast ad campaign to help bring to light the company's new eye-gaze remote designed to help consumers with mobility impairments be more independent. In 2017, Jimmy also self-published a children's book, *Will the One-Winged Eagle*, which teaches children self-acceptance, inclusion, and persistence in the face of adversity. Jimmy has sold over 2,000 copies of his book and has toured over 30 elementary schools to share his message.



**“Experiencing the Hero Award on my first day of the job brought tears to my eyes, showing me how much AWB does for the community of people with physical disabilities. It was truly amazing!”**

**— ALLISON, AWB INTERN**





**Thank you to our  
incredibly generous  
sponsors, donors,  
and supporters.  
We couldn't do it  
without you!**



**\$30,000+**

Widener Memorial Foundation

**\$20,000+**

Connelly Foundation  
25th Century Foundation  
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**\$10,000+**

Anonymous  
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**\$5000+**

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**\$250+**

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Rebecca Bradbeer  
Jeff Bregman  
Lori & Lee Brower  
James Buck  
Bernstein—Shannon Carney  
Maria Ceferatti & Ron Bonenfant  
Shaelin Cantwell  
Paul & Joan Crowley  
Constance Culpepper

Philadelphia Union—Mark Evans  
Aeryn & Bruce Fenton  
76ers—Mike Goings  
Allen & Sallie Greenough  
Barbi Griffith  
Debra Grossman  
Richard Grossman  
Shields Facilities Maintenance—  
Richard & Terri Grossman  
Neill Hartley  
Ayesha Khanna  
Cornerstone—Christine Kondra  
Andrew Levin  
Maria Machita  
Christopher McCann and Lucy  
Klain McCann  
Northeast Fitness Inc.—Michael  
McDevitt  
Philadelphia Phillies—Debbie Nocito  
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Jane Thomas  
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Kate Wallace  
Leonard & Joan West

**\$100+**

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Mary Broderick  
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Mary Kathleen Keating  
Catherine Kelly  
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Timothy Lederer  
Susie Lengel  
Frank Leveque  
Lost Tree Club  
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Sally McNichol  
Paolo Paciucci  
William Person  
Play-A-Round Golf  
Hannah Presley  
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Jim Simcoke  
Beverly Smith  
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Liz Sur  
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Jamie Vaughn  
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**Under \$100**

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Boutique W  
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Alycia Ceferatti  
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Charities Aid Foundation of  
America  
Robin Cohen  
Christina Coia  
Doug Connolly  
Kim Covello  
Richard & Theresa Dooley  
Maura Doyle  
Amy Estroff  
Sandra Fink  
Rosemary Giordano

GH Entertainment—Rene  
Goodwin & Edward Hagopian  
Hand and Stone  
Robert & Brenda Hardegen  
Anne Hobbs  
Home Grown  
Jennifer & James Huth  
John Jackson  
Thomas Katen  
Sarah Keidel  
Ralph Korkor  
Stephen Kuerschner  
Marc & Jennifer Lederman  
Longwood Gardens  
Karen & Daniel Lyons  
Roger Margulies  
Anthony & Jane Marinucci  
Ann Marriott  
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Julie Myers  
Maryann Nicholson  
Jeannette Otley  
Christine Parsons  
Carole Petner  
Lawrence Phillips  
Kathy Pratt  
Kelly Price  
Felicia Progar  
Katherine Pryma  
K Reber  
Kimberly & Thomas Renehan  
David Rotay & Jane David  
Lisa Ruth  
Kathleen Sample  
Daniel Swartz  
Joy Tartar  
Ray Terwilliger  
James Thomas  
Tracy Trainer  
Cecilia Ulmer  
Gina Vincent  
Susan Wells-Johnson  
Kenneth Woodson  
Terry Zaccagni

Acting Without Boundaries mission has been clear, focused and consistent since it was established in 2004. Founder and Executive Director, Christine Rouse said, “I want to create a space where kids could get involved in theater, form friendships and gain confidence” and that is just what she did when creating AWB.

Although our founding values remain the same, our programs are expanding quickly, offering a place for more people with a physical disability to get involved in the performing arts. Our actors are able to call AWB a second home, where they have found their second family through collaboration, friendship, and performance.

**To ensure that future generations of children, teens, and adults with physical disabilities can find a place where they can flourish and build confidence through the performing arts, this year we established the AWB Legacy Fund.**

The AWB Legacy Fund is a newly created permanent investment fund established with a goal of providing future financial support to the operating budget for AWB programs. This well-managed permanent investment fund will secure future programming for AWB and allow for our actors and future actors to blossom. Without a permanent funding stream from the state or federal level, AWB must secure its own future. With a focus on its purpose and clear restrictions on how these funds may be used, the establishment of the AWB Legacy Fund is the first step to enable AWB programs to live in perpetuity. Establishing the AWB Legacy Fund lets relevant stakeholders (participants, program partners, audiences, staff, donors etc.) know they are investing in an organization that has a plan with long-term stability and future goals.

**ACTING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES**

**AWB**

**UNIQUE PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMS  
FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

**ACTING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES**

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AWB is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

