



ARTS EDUCATION CONNECTION — SAN DIEGO —



Celebrating Community Partners with Lemon Grove School District “Together We Thrive”

We are honored and excited to celebrate our dynamic partnership with the Lemon Grove School District. In providing after-school arts programming, our collaboration fosters creativity, expression, and opportunities for students in the district. It was an inspiring evening of coming together with families, district personnel, and all the organizations that work hard to ensure arts education is available in the East County region.

Our partnership is not just a program; it represents a shared vision to ensure that every child can reach their full potential.

As we continue to develop this partnership, we look forward to more opportunities to collaborate, create, and celebrate together.

Be on the lookout for more inspirational collaborations coming up on the horizon!
We absolutely love our Little Lemon Learners and can't wait to see them grow!



□ More Good Grant News! □

What is the Prebys Sparx Grant?

The Prebys Sparx Grant is a transformative initiative launched by the Prebys Foundation in August 2024, aiming to enhance youth mental and behavioral health across San Diego County through innovative programs that integrate arts, culture, and nature.

Why the Prebys Sparx Grant?

A growing number of healthcare providers, researchers, and community advocates recognize the importance of not only treating illness but also promoting mental and behavioral well-being through non-clinical experiences in the arts, culture, and nature. The Prebys Foundation aims to enhance behavioral health and well-being by providing access to the arts, culture, and nature.

How Arts Education Connection San Diego Fits In?

We are thrilled to be one of 14 community partners providing teaching artists for this incredible program in San Diego, which blends expressive arts therapy with arts education. We achieve this through our continued efforts to work with the youth of San Diego, in collaboration with Juvenile Court Community Schools and local libraries.

You can find out more about the arts initiative [here](#).

Artism Month

Arts education in San Diego needs to be accessible to all students, including those who are neurodivergent.

We are deeply committed to creating inclusive, equitable learning spaces where all students, regardless of ability, can thrive through the arts. Our work with students on the autism spectrum continues to evolve through meaningful partnerships and ongoing professional development for our teaching artists.

Last Fall, with generous support from the G.A. Foster Legacy Foundation, we hosted not one, but two powerful inclusion training sessions in collaboration with Kids Included Together ([KIT](#)). These sessions brought together our teaching artists and members of San Diego's vibrant arts nonprofit community to deepen our shared understanding of inclusive practices in the classroom.



KIT's mission to help the world embrace differences and see the ability in every child aligns perfectly with our own. Their expertise in behavior support, coaching, policy development, and inclusion best practices helped us explore new ways to better engage and support students with autism, ensuring that the arts remain accessible to every learner.

We're energized and inspired to continue building welcoming, creative spaces where every child's voice, perspective, and imagination are celebrated.



Teaching Artist Spotlight

Austin John Jones

In his own words and reflections, we celebrate Austin and all of his contributions to our organization and the kids of San Diego County.

At the age of 5, Austin told his parents at the dinner table, "Mom, Dad, I want to be an artist when I grow up." Austin's parents looked at one another, paused, and then looked back at him, replying, "Okay, Austin, we will make it happen."

Ever since that moment, Austin followed his dream. He took private art lessons, studied with various mentors, and graduated from Art Center College of Design with a

Bachelor's degree in Illustration. And ever since, he has continued to create art. Austin is currently living the dream he wanted. He runs his own art business with his family, continues to make art, and actively teaches art.

In addition, Austin has lived his whole life on the Autism spectrum. He continues to spread awareness and is assisting multiple non-profit organizations with Autism awareness. He writes blogs for the Art for Autism website.

Austin has a big heart, as exemplified by his kind and generous spirit. Austin's philosophy is that he hopes his art will inspire positive change throughout the world. And most importantly, make the world smile.

Austin once said: "I hope my art will make a difference. No matter how big or small,

change is a significant factor in my life, as my art is always evolving. I hope that change will inspire the world to be a better place."

Austin has been teaching for Arts Education Connection San Diego for eight years. "I enjoy teaching and inspiring others to live their dreams. Art is a universal language, and it's one of the most wonderful ways to teach others. The thing that keeps me at it every time I go to a new school is the reward of making a difference in my students' lives. Every time I have to end a contract, I always close the last session with "Mr. Jones' words of Wisdom." Because I don't want them to remember me, I want them to remember how much I cared and believed in each one of them to do their best. If you are wondering, those words are: Kindness, Bravery, Honesty, and Hope. These words I follow and live by. I hope all my students will utilize them well. It certainly made a difference in my life."

Please visit his latest show at the Oceanside Museum of Art, and for more information, see his interview with [ABC10News](#)

Austin's Website can be found [here](#).

We invite you to support our teaching artists so they can continue to inspire and educate students through their creative talents and passion for the arts. Your generous donation will enable our teaching artists to conduct workshops, performances, and educational activities, enriching the lives of students and fostering a love for creativity and learning. Join us in making a positive impact on the lives of students by contributing today!

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