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5th Annual Performing Arts Showcase to Feature Miami-Based Dance Instructor Karen Peterson

Event features teens and adults with disabilities from across Brevard

Rockledge, Fla. – [Brevard Achievement Center's](#) (BAC) VSA Florida-Brevard County (VSAFL-BC) art program will host its fifth annual Performing Arts Showcase on Thursday, October 19 at 10:30 a.m. on the main stage of the King Center for the Performing Arts. Along with several visiting artists from the community, Karen Peterson of [Karen Peterson and Dancers](#) (KPD) in Miami will teach and participate in the program.

The Showcase features nine classes of middle and high school Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students and one BLAST class from Brevard Public Schools (BPS), as well as adults with disabilities from BAC's Adult Day Training program. BPS classrooms come from Central, Johnson (two classes) and Southwest Middle Schools, as well as Eau Gallie, Rockledge and Viera High Schools. All classes worked with a visiting artist from the Central Florida community for eight weeks to create and rehearse performances in dance, song, music or theatre. This year four classrooms also received instruction from Peterson. These four classes will participate in the Peterson-designed finale then be joined by the remaining classrooms for a free style performance.

"Karen believes that through dance we can better understand our common humanity by exploring and appreciating how it elevates the human spirit to move freely regardless of perceived or real barriers," said VSAFL-BC Lee Sorensen. "This belief fits in well with the spirit of the Showcase and is why we were thrilled to add Karen to our mix of talented visiting artists."

Other visiting artists include:

- Marty Eyster-Mercado is a dancer with 30 years of experience including as a ballerina with the Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and Kirov School of Leningrad, Russia, among other notable companies, Eyster-Mercado is the Director of the Muscle Memory Dance Company.
- Nicole C. Warren has studied dance since the age of five and has a classical dance foundation of ballet, jazz, tap and pointe and in 2016 co-founded the Chance 2 Dance Foundation, which includes the Chance 2 Dance Studio, a non-profit organization that provides dance instruction to the disability community at free or reduced rates.
- Chris Kahl toured throughout Europe and was featured on the BBC several times before returning to Florida and writing "*A Musical Journey Through Florida*" which highlights Florida history through original music.
- Ed Eliason began playing drums in the fourth grade, continued through college and has now performed professionally for 50 years in a wide variety of genres. He became a teaching artist with Brevard Cultural Alliance in 2004 and the following year joined VSA Florida. Since that time he has taught over 1,000 students traditional and world percussion.

BAC's VSAFL-BC would like to thank Jim and Michele LaHam, as well as their family and friends, for generously supporting the Performing Arts Showcase in memory of daughter, Noelle who passed away suddenly in January 2015. Because of Noelle's passion for the arts and special bond with a relative who has Down syndrome, Showcase expenses have been defrayed since that time.

Showcase admission is free and open to the public. Those that would like to raise funds for BAC'S VSAFL-BC's other events can attend a Bunco Fiesta fundraiser on Friday, November 3 at the agency's Rockledge headquarters, or 1845 Cogswell Street. The event begins at 6 p.m. with a chili dinner that includes beer and wine, then Bunco at 7 p.m. A silent auction, 50/50 raffle and prizes also will be on hand. Tickets are \$25 per person in advance and \$30 at the door. To register, visit bacbrevard.com/events or call Sorensen at (321) 537-4243.

For more information about BAC and VSAFL-BC, visit bacbrevard.com.

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