

2016 GFWC Florida Arts Creativity Report



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For more than thirty five (35) years, GFWC Brandon Service League has sponsored a "Very Special Arts Festival" (VSA), especially for kindergarten aged developmentally disabled public school students in their area. This is usually the only "field trip" that they can attend, since almost a one on one teacher/chaperone/student is necessary for these students. There is detailed coordination between the club members and Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) transportation department as well as the ESE department (exceptional student education) of the HCPS district. Members contact the schools to solicit teacher approval and coordinate with the teachers to bring their little ones and all the necessary chaperones, including lots of parental involvement. Their guests for this "field trip" require personal assistance from members, help with transportation needs, and other members also direct traffic on site.

The GFWC Brandon Service League members are able to host 100 to 200 children, their teachers and chaperones for a fun filled 3-4 hour adventure. Because of all the necessary coordination to pull this off, it always seems to be a miracle when it all comes together! They involve approximately 20 students from area high schools, who volunteer their time and assist club members, in doing "hands on" activities, such as face painting, decorating large paper hats with stickers, beads, bows, and feathers. Each child is provided with a bag with their name on it. They make very simple crafts using decorative stamps, paint and a lot of glitter. All of the club CSP and Advancement Area chairmen are each responsible for manning a table with a different activity. The high school students are a tremendous help with this.

VSA is held at a local large church, and the club makes use of the large auditorium as well as the outside open area (not a playground). Outside, weather permitting (and it mostly has), there are sites for puppet or magic shows, child size musical instruments, such as bongos and kazoos, etc., and story telling. By the time they get outside, the kids get to run off a little of their energy and then settle down on a blanket or sheet and have a picnic lunch. The club works with their local McDonald's which donates the lunches, including fruit, burgers and drinks. This McDonald's even donates enough for teachers and chaperones. Members pick up the food and serve the food. The local Chick-Fil-A Cow participates with their famous Cow on hand to visit and take pictures, and Chick-Fil-A provides lunch for the student volunteers and the members.

After the picnic, there are some happy but tired children ready to climb back on their buses with all their goodies. In fact, pretty much everyone is ready for a nap!

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