

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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Jersey City to Host Fund Raising Art Show Featuring Rise Up Gallery – A Collection of Artwork Created by Artists with Disabilities

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy, the **Municipal Council**, and the **Dept. of Health and Human Services/Division of Cultural Affairs** present a group exhibition featuring the artwork of *Rise Up Gallery*, a collection of artwork created by artists with disabilities, at **City Hall, 280 Grove Street** for the entire month of December.

Opening reception will be held from **6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.** on **Thursday, December 8, 2011** in the Rotunda Gallery at City Hall, 280 Grove Street. Over the past four months, the *Rise Up Gallery* art collection has grown considerably. Featured artists include: David McCauley, Kasey Tarauj, Jay Liesener, Isabell Villacis, Laurie Kammer, and Kenneth Martin.

“The arts are a vital part of Jersey City’s growth and progress,” said **Mayor Healy**. “Artists contribute to our economic revitalization by stimulating commerce and helping communities retain their vibrancy. This particular show, however, is an opportunity for us to support an amazing cause and make a positive impact on someone living with paralysis.”

The reception and exhibition are free and open to the public and City Hall is handicap accessible. Refreshments will be served. The show, which is curated by City Hall Art Curator Greg Brickey, will run through the end of this month. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rise Up Gallery has stated that proceeds from any tax deductible artwork purchased will go toward Quality of Life grants for individuals living with paralysis, research grants to Medical Institutions searching for a Cure to Paralysis, and an Adaptive Community Art Space.

For more information, contact the Division of Cultural Affairs at 201-547-6921.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///



About Rise Up Gallery

Rise Up Gallery is the flagship program of Rise Up To Cure Paralysis, a registered 501(c)3 organization. Incorporated in October 2010, RUTCP began pursuing innovative fundraising strategies to allocate resources for the purpose of creating Quality of Life Grants to be awarded to individuals living with paralysis. Several successful art auctions inspired us to create the Rise Up Gallery, where disabled artists are able to showcase their art & photography. The proceeds

from the sale of these artworks fund the quarterly Quality of Life Grants to individuals, annual Research Grants to Medical Institutions, and an Adaptive Community Art Space.

Rise Up Gallery is able to cater to large and small art installations. Corporate Lobbies & Offices, Hospital Campuses, Gallery Exhibitions, Hotel Interiors, Personal Collectors, etc....

April 2012 we will be establishing a community art studio, "Rise Up Art Space," where disabled artists may collaborate, attend workshops and have access to adaptive art supplies. This business model will supplement income to individuals with paralysis who struggle finding employment. In addition, the Rise Up Art Space would serve as a sanctuary and social meeting place for people who may feel isolated as a result of a Spinal Cord Injury.

For more information, log on to: www.riseupgallery.com or call (303) 960-7810.

meet the artists



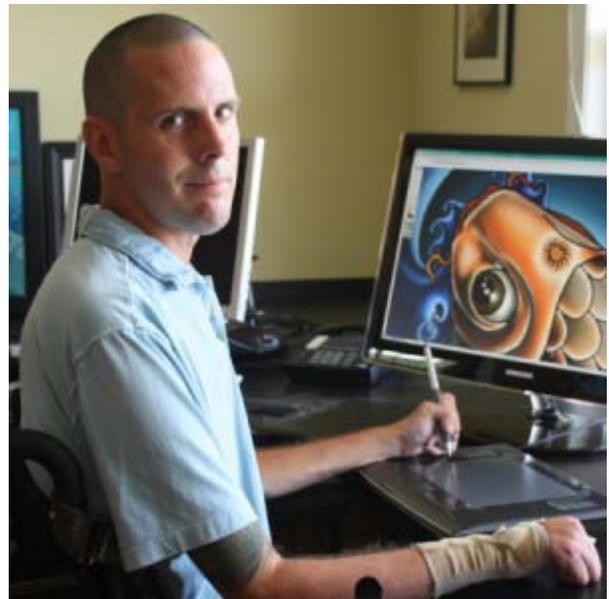
DAVID MCCAULEY is the founder of *Rise Up Gallery* as well as one of the participating artists. In the summer of 2008, David sustained a spinal cord injury at the C6 vertebrae, resulting in paralysis from the chest down and limiting the use of his hands. Always an avid photographer, David's portfolio is a wide ranging collection of unique angles and symmetry found in his black and white urban streetscapes, colorfully majestic landscapes and documentary photography. David's craft also transcends into other artworks, where he is influenced by cityscapes, board-riding (surf/skate/snow), shades of blue, water, watertowers, musical elements, and the colors of sunsets. Exploring new sustainable ways to adaptively create art, David is fond of utilizing stencils, recycled materials, oil/acrylic on canvas, and mixed media.



KASEY TARARUJ was fourteen years old in 2000, when an unexpected and unpredictable AVM on her spinal cord took away the use of her legs. Art and creating has been Kasey's biggest passion for her entire life, but it wasn't until her situation arose that she began to use art on a different level than many artists. As the most significant form of venting and dealing with life as a paraplegic, drawing and painting is Kasey's sanity, especially during unbearable moments. Initially, she used her artwork to illustrate the thoughts and feelings she could not otherwise express, but as life slowly became easier, her subject matter began to mature and expand. Having always been drawn to and heavily inspired by strange and surreal artwork, much of Kasey's artwork could be described as bizarre with a touch of darkness, while other of her work focuses on

beauty or light-hearted nonsense. Kasey's most popular series are her One-Eyed Girls (paintings and drawings of distorted, but sexy female figures) and Kaotic Krittters (paintings and sculptures of cartoony characters with unique personalities), but she never limits herself as an artist or even as a person, constantly pursuing new projects and experiences.

JAY LIESENER is a member of the *Rise Up* artist community. When Jay was 17, in 1989, he was doing back flips on a friend's trampoline, misjudged his landing and broke his neck at C4/5 vertebrae. It was just before his senior year of high school and he thought his opportunity to pursue a career in the arts was over. Following the initial hospital stay and rehab, Jay regrouped, found a new career path that he was passionate about, went to college and continued on with life. But, that need for creative release was always there, lurking in the periphery. In 2003, Jay had a computer controlled muscle stimulator implanted in his left hand and arm. This device gave him back some use of his left hand and a chance to try drawing again. He bought some pencils and a drawing pad, and although it was frustrating at first, there was slow progress. Jay was creating again, expressing ideas and emotions that were impossible to share through words. In 2005, a friend introduced Jay to a Wacom tablet. It was amazing! One of those life changing moments. Suddenly, he could work in any medium he wanted, zoom in to work on details, then zoom out to create long sweeping arcs, and work in layers. Jay was hooked and his pencils have been collecting dust ever since. The process is intensive and there are over 100 hours in each of Jay's drawings and paintings. For Jay, art is therapy, a place where he can lose himself in a meditative place.





ISABELL VILLACIS was born October 3rd, 1979, weighing only one pound and was diagnosed with severe cerebral palsy. Thanks to her mother, Ana Villacis, her caretaker, she has overcome many obstacles and since the age of 16 her interests have inclined towards art. After graduation from Lakeview School (Edison, NJ) at age 21, Isabell participated in a non-profit program that facilitated individual artistic expressions and encouraged creative abilities. In a profound way, this talented young woman shares with us her experience with art and how she has found freedom and the ability to express her feelings, emotions and thoughts through the creation of work. Isabell has participated in many art shows including: The Department of Human Services (Trenton, NJ), The Princeton University Art Museum (Princeton, NJ), Kessler Rehabilitation Institute (Livingston, NJ), and in Paris,

France. Among her multiple talents and gifts is her kind heart. In 2007 Isabell was able to fulfill one of her dreams, which was to visit the Eiffel Tower in Paris. This elegant tower has been one of her precious muses and been the inspiration for many of her paintings. With no use of her legs and minimal use of her hands, Isabell is inspiring to all who have the fortune to meet her. Isabell is a member of Fundacion Manos A La Ayuda, Inc. Hands Help Hands and has been the inspiration for their scholarship fund called the “The Picasso Dream” which provides funds each year to students graduating from high school with physical or learning disabilities, who want to, like Isabell, pursue their dream in the art field.

LAURIE KAMMER is thrilled to be joining the *Rise Up* Artist Community! In June 2011, Laurie fell from a tree resulting in a T-10 Spinal Cord Injury. She knew the instant she fell that the arts were going to play a big role in getting herself “back on her feet.” Taking all forms of dance classes since a young age...Laurie is also a passionate visual artist and singer/songwriter with her beloved ukulele. Laurie holds a bachelors degree in Sculpture and Digital Art & Design with her minor in music. Though she had planned on attending graduate school this fall, Laurie is adapting to the new turn her life has taken and continues to follow her heart towards a fulfilled and passionate life. She is eager to begin working with the adaptive art studio, “Rise Up Art Space,” beginning this spring to bring her gifts to the community of disabled artists. A certified Music Together teacher and Radiant Child Yoga teacher, Laurie hopes to facilitate an “inter-modal” approach towards weaving together all forms of art in order to meet each unique individual’s specific interests and needs. During her stay at Kessler Rehabilitation, she had the privilege of working with a new Art therapist and quickly felt that others suffering this kind of trauma would benefit from the limitless potential of the healing arts. Now home with her family, Laurie is creating her own healing therapy program with an Expressive Arts Therapist, Thai Yoga, Essential Oils, Acupuncture, Myofascial massage, Music Therapy, and an Enzyme-rich diet. Hopeful and optimistic that a cure is just around the corner, Laurie is grateful to contribute towards funding spinal cord research while also helping others to “Rise Up.” Her motto: “Give to community, Live Spontaneously, Love Universally, Co-Create with me!”

