



Empowering Through Enrichment: The Benefits of Creative Wellness in Day Programs

Kayla Casteel, LEND 2024–2025 Family

Why This Project?



My passion for this work started in two places:

- **First**, in my backyard—when I began growing flowers to help process my son's autism diagnosis.
- **And second**, when I started offering flower workshops in local day programs.

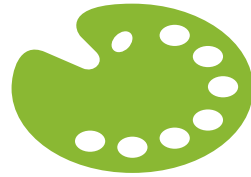
What I observed:

- Many day programs for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) lack consistent, meaningful enrichment activities.
- Limited funding and staffing often result in enrichment being deprioritized.



What is Enrichment and why does it matter?

Enrichment is engaging activities—like:



Art



Music



Gardening

These activities aren't just fun add-ons. They support mental health, reduce isolation, and create connection.

Barriers for Enrichment

The challenge: most day programs don't have the funding to offer consistent, high-quality enrichment. I spoke with day program leaders who told me they often rely on volunteers or donations to make activities happen—and when staffing is short, enrichment is the first thing to go.



**Lack of
Funding**



**Limited
Staff**



**Inadequate
Space**

What the Data Says

76% 

of participants in structured art programs reported **improved mood and reduced anxiety**

(National Endowment for the Arts, 2019)



 58%

reported **improved memory, focus, and executive function** from visual arts programs
(Stuckey & Nobel, 2010)

65% 

of participants demonstrated **enhanced verbal and non-verbal communication** in group therapy

(Schweizer et al., 2014)

Methods

To build this brochure, I used several simple methods:

Talked with Experts

I had informal conversations with day program leaders and a few past LEND fellows. They shared helpful insights about what's working, what's missing, and what people really value in enrichment activities.

Read Research

I reviewed trusted sources, articles, and studies about the benefits of creative programs like art, music, and gardening—especially for adults with disabilities.

Found Resources

I searched for national organizations that offer tools or funding to support wellness programs. Some of the best came from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Designed for Real People

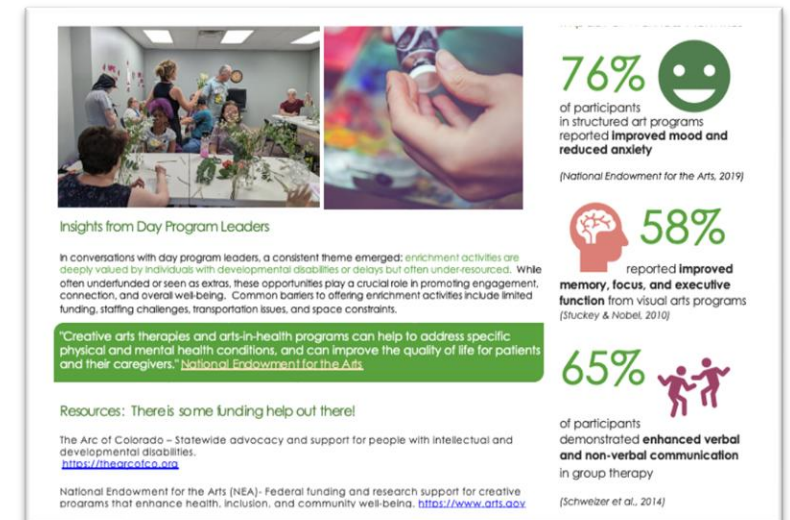
I made the brochure easy to read, uses friendly language, and highlights the strengths and potential of people in day programs.

My Product:

Enrichment Advocacy Brochure

An engaging, accessible brochure designed to:

- **Explain *why enrichment matters*** in day programs
- Highlight the ***barriers*** that prevent programs from offering consistent enrichment
- **Share *data and insight*** from program leaders and national organizations
- A **call to action** to ask for more funding



Sharing the Work & Looking Ahead

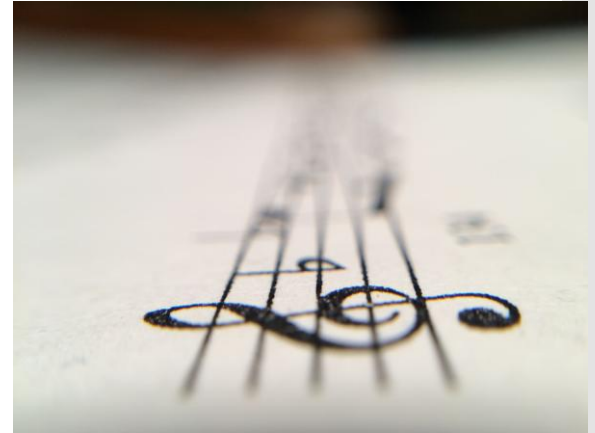
Dissemination:

- **Local day program providers** as a tool for advocacy, and fundraising
- **Family advocates and caregivers** to help them understand and champion enrichment
- **Policy leaders and funders** to highlight unmet needs and drive support
- Through **JFK Partners** and **LEND** networks for broader awareness

Next Steps

- Present project findings at **community and professional events**
- **Explore partnerships** with local creatives and organizations
- **Pursue creative funding solutions**—grants, community partnerships—to sustain enrichment in the face of potential Medicaid cuts

What Could Be Possible?



Imagine if enrichment was part of the plan—not just an afterthought?

Imagine consistent, meaningful activities that support mental wellness, identity, and connection.

We could build partnerships with local creatives and make this work sustainable. But it requires investment—and a shift in how we value enrichment.

Acknowledgments

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Thank you to the **faculty at JFK Partners** and the **LEND program** for your support and guidance throughout this project.

Deep gratitude to the **day program managers and staff** who took the time to share their insight and experiences with me.

Special thanks to **families and self-advocates** whose lived experience continues to shape this work.

References

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