

# 2011 ANNUAL REPORT



2 Girls Learning origami in the Circus workshop—part of the Tom and Huck go to Camp Program



Step Back in Time—Our New Program for Adults



Campers engrossed in the Tom and Huck go to Camp program



Bobble-head dragon painted by nine-year old camper in the China workshop—part of the Tom and Huck go to Camp summer program



Buffalo Bill and Campers from the World's Fair workshop—part of the Tom and Huck go to Camp summer program



Campers playing "Pin the Nose on the Clown"—part of the Tom and Huck go to Camp summer program

## TEACHING FOR THE FUTURE THROUGH THE PAST

A well-informed citizenry is vital to the future of a well-run democracy. It is imperative that we teach people about history so that they don't repeat the mistakes of the past. Victorian Vanities seeks to engage the public in interactive learning experiences that teach American history making it accessible and relevant for everyone.



## Letter from the Executive Director

At the beginning of 2011 we asked ourselves, should we cut our prices in half? Would our donors make up the difference? Would we still be in business? We cut our prices to \$99 plus \$2 per child for materials. Our donors made up the difference. We are still in business. I am proud to report that 2011 saw a 55% increase in enrollments! We were able to enroll more workshops than ever before, and to serve more children than ever before. I am also very proud of the relationship that we are forging with our largest client, the Philadelphia Department of Recreation. This year saw us add two new members to our Board, both of whom are Facilities Directors at local playgrounds. Their expertise and intimate knowledge of the way the city works in the Recreation field will be an asset to us in the future. I was asked to speak at the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Happy Hollow Playground. Happy Hollow is the oldest playground in the city of Philadelphia. I have come to know its Facilities Director and I expect that he will be joining our board in 2012.

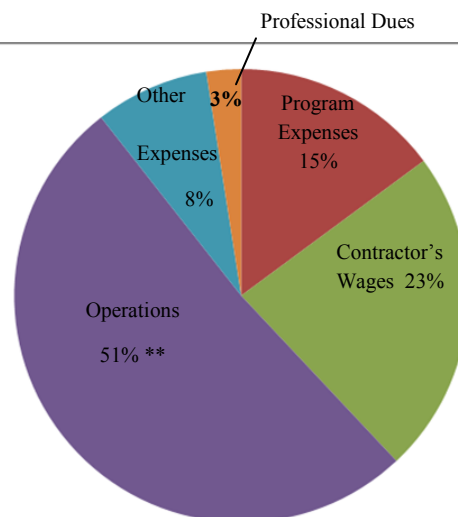
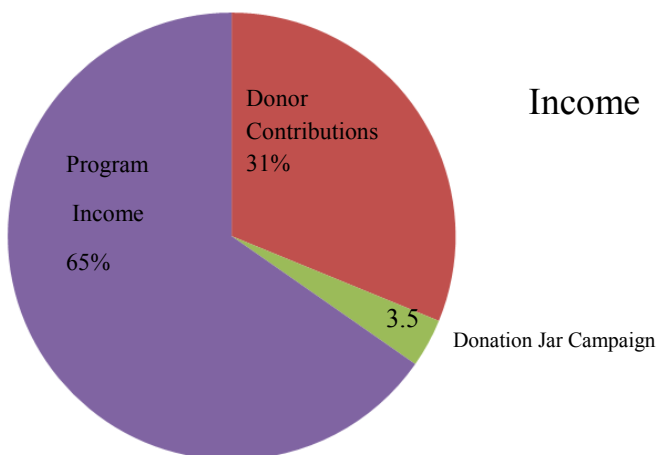
Under the auspices of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, I took a course in telling our stories. Effective storytelling is crucial to how we conduct our business and how we enrich people's lives. The results of that workshop are seen in Seth's story, elsewhere in this report. I am also coming closer to that coveted Historic Preservation Certificate from Bucks County Community College. This certificate is the only one offered in Historic Preservation in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. I have been working on this for the last three years. This year I was able to create a framework for an adult program called "Step Back in Time." Currently it is being offered only to retirement communities but ultimately it will be offered to any adult venue that wants to host us. This will give us a new audience of older adults eager to learn about American History. Due to my work with activities directors from the various retirement communities in the eleven counties that we serve, I expect that we will be adding a Board member from one of those communities in the near future.

Thanks to one of our volunteers, we instituted a donation jar campaign. Jars were put in several diners in Philadelphia County. Surprisingly enough, they have become a valuable source of new revenue for us. This will be an ongoing campaign for us with jars being placed in new counties periodically.

2012 is shaping up to be an exciting year as well. We have kept our prices stable, added two new programs to the Tom and Huck go to Camp series and will be rolling out the adult program in June. We hope to be exploring new markets such as Montessori schools, and after school programs. As we learn about Facebook and blogging, we will be posting on a regular basis. We would appreciate your help. Your support and dedication to our mission is invaluable.

*Rochelle Christopher*

Rochelle Christopher



\*\*Operational expenses include but are not limited to: fundraising expenses, postage, website, and staff development

# SETH'S STORY



Seth is an eight year old boy with attention deficit disorder. He never sits still. He is constantly getting up from his chair, tapping his fingers, walking away from his seat, and rarely able to see a project through to completion in one sitting.

As part of its programming, the summer day camp that Seth goes to invites Victorian Vanities to teach a workshop about the past. Jan, the female teacher, is wearing a cream colored dress trimmed with black lace and ribbons. John, the male teacher, is wearing a white shirt and pants with a striped jacket. The children want to know if the teachers are uncomfortable in their period clothing. They are extremely concerned with the welfare of their guests. Among other things, the Victorian Vanities teachers have brought samples of small trinket boxes that might have been made in the Victorian Era. The boxes are small, about the size of two matchbox cars. They are brightly painted, with stones glued into the top. John asks the children what they collect.

“Stones,” says one.

“Coins,” says another.

“Shells,” Says Seth.

The campers are told that children in the past collected the same things as they do. They learn that they are not so different from other children.

Seth reaches for the box. “Cool!” he exclaims.

“You need to paint one of your own,” Jan tells him.

A look of disappointment crosses his face. He sits down and waits to begin. Barry, a camp counselor who is also a friend of Seth’s family, sits down beside him.

The paint is in six little jars; each jar is the color of the paint in side. Water is in a small styrofoam bowl. There is a paintbrush with a red handle and an unpainted box with a recess on top for the stones. Seth looks at the paint, the water, and the box. A look of bewilderment comes to his face.

“What do I do now?” he asks.

Jan patiently explains, “You put the brush into the water, and then into the paint, and rub the brush with the paint onto the box.” Seth picks up the brush. “I can’t do this!” he says and starts to cry. Barry starts talking to him immediately in low tones so as not to disturb the rest of the class and calms him down enough so that Seth finally picks up the brush and puts it in the water.

A minute later, seemingly without provocation, Seth angrily throws the brush away and starts to cry. “I can’t do this.,” He crumples in a heap, crying, until Barry is able to calm him down once again and guides his hand first to the paint and then to the box. The other children ignore him. They are used to his tantrums and calmly go about their work while Seth cries.

A few more minutes and Seth angrily runs off into another room. Barry goes after him, and tells him that he can give the box to his mother for her birthday. “Don’t you think your mom would like this?” Barry asks him, “especially because YOU made it?” Seth agrees. “I’ll use my mom’s favorite colors,” he says.

Barry brings Seth back into the room where the painting is being done. He puts the paintbrush into Seth’s hand and guides him first to the water where Seth dips the brush, then into a jar of blue paint. Barry guides Seth’s hand to paint the first streaks on the box.

Over the course of forty-five minutes the box is painted and the stones are glued on. There are several instances of frustration and Barry keeps reminding Seth that he is painting this box for his mother and how happy she’ll be when she sees it. Seth calms down quickly each time. The memory of his mother and how proud she will be of him keeps coming back with more vividness.

When Seth is done, he proudly shows the box to Barry, who has been sitting quietly beside him. “That’s wonderful,” Barry says. The box is painted a muddy blue with bright yellow swirls around the bottom. There are stones neatly glued into the top. Seth is so proud of himself that he wants all of his classmates to see his box. “I painted this all by myself!” he crows to his fellow classmates.

“Give me the box so that I can put it with the others,” says a counselor.

“No!” Seth exclaims. “Let me keep it!” The counselor backs away and lets Seth keep the box he’s holding.

With the help of Victorian Vanities, Seth was able to do something he was rarely able to manage—see a project through to completion. His confidence greatly improved and he learned that he was able to work through his attention deficit disorder. WE enrich the lives of the people we touch by improving self – confidence and giving children a new way of seeing themselves.

## VICTORIAN VANITIES, INC.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Barbara Ricker**

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**Brian Mango**

**Lou Cabrera**

Executive Director

**Rochelle Christopher**

We cannot thank you enough for your time, your experience and your guidance in this endeavor.

## VICTORIAN VANITIES WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

**Our Donors**, whose gracious support allows us to fulfill our mission

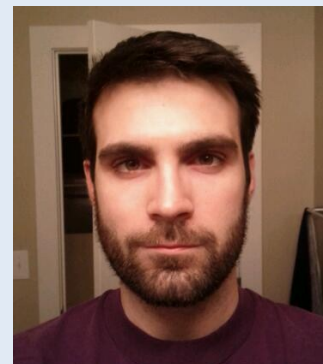
**John Thompson**, whose unique teaching ability enables us to touch more children's lives

**Our supporters**, who have an interest in seeing us succeed

**Our Volunteers and Interns**, who are as committed to our mission as we are

## PHIL MARCHINI, VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Phil has been working with us for much of this year. Thanks to his efforts we have a new logo and a unified look for the website, and well as all printed matter that comes out of our office. Phil taught in the summer program and has created a donation jar program that has been instrumental in raising funds for us. His extraordinary passion for history makes a substantial difference in the lives of the people he touches.



## LOOKING AHEAD...

In 2012, Victorian Vanities will continue to improve its offerings. Tom and Huck Go to Camp, our summer program, will be keeping its rate at last year's prices of \$99 plus \$2 per child for materials. We are proud to announce that we are offering a new program on China for next year. Campers will learn about this very important country and how it will touch their lives in the future. They will play a college bowl/millionaire type of multiple choice game about the importance of the government/economy of China, learn about the seven different species of dragons in this, the year of the dragon, and paint bobblehead dragons.

In addition we are offering a program for the younger set—six, seven and eight year olds. Campers will learn the basics of square-dancing and how to recognize shapes in paintings such as Rousseau's "Fandarole."

In June, we will be rolling out our newest program, "Step Back in Time." This program will have been designed exclusively for adults and will feature lectures on topics that we hope will be of interest, such as World War II, and other aspects of American History not covered in our children's programs. Each of these lectures will be no more than fifty minutes in length and each is designed to engage older adults in the joy of learning.