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# PYD Profile

Partners for Youth with Disabilities | 2013-2014

## Sing Along with Aline Haunton



Aline Haunton has been an active member of the Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) community since 2006, when she began participating in PYD's Access to Theatre program. A gifted singer, Aline has grown through her experiences at Access to Theatre to conquer stage fright, social and emotional challenges, and low self-esteem. Aline has performed alongside Sally Taylor, professional singer and songwriter and PYD mentor, and can captivate an audience of 200 as easily as an audience of 10.



During their rehearsals, Sally shares tips with battling stage fright, vocal projection, and the importance of confidence. Aline's stepmother, Robin, explained that watching her stepdaughter on stage has been a moving experience that portrays Aline's transformative growth throughout the years. Included below are Robin's own words as a parent involved with Partners for Youth with Disabilities.

"Aline has been involved with many community-based programs, but for most, she never quite fit. Aline has multiple challenges that include blindness, cognitive issues as well as psychological issues, and finding a population where she belongs can be quite disheartening. From the very beginning, PYD's Access to Theatre fit her like a glove. I have never seen her as excited or interested in any other program. She has always felt comfortable with the other participants and feels like the program is a place where she belongs.



PYD's Access to Theatre is a place that I see Aline flourish, grow, and enjoy regardless of what may be areas of concern that exist for her in other programs. The sensitivity and caring of the involved staff, to make Aline feel accepted and welcome, regardless of what's going on for her, has made this experience one that not only brings Aline great joy, but provides peace of mind for me as a parent. From both an educational and social perspective, PYD has truly benefited Aline. PYD has made her excited about music and the arts.

Socially, Aline has always had a difficult time. Her disabilities make reading and understanding social cues an issue and most of the time Aline approaches social situations like a bull in a china closet. She will overwhelm or repel her peers because of her over eagerness and desire to make friends. This has been a non-issue at Access to Theatre. The warmth and acceptance of all, regardless of differ-

ences, has allowed Aline to make friends and feel completely comfortable just being herself. After participating in the program on Saturdays, she walks away with an air of confidence in herself that she does not usually display. It truly is a pleasure for me, as a parent, to see.



I believe that Partners for Youth with Disabilities provides a service that is very hard to find in many other programs that exist around the state. Through mentoring, theatre and the arts, students feel completely comfortable to be themselves, express themselves and just have fun. PYD celebrates them as individuals and the boundaries that separate them in most of their other life activities completely disappear. They are in a place where they are not defined by their disabilities."

PYD empowers youth with disabilities to reach their full potential by providing transformative mentoring programs, youth development opportunities, and inclusion expertise.  
For more information, please visit [www.pyd.org](http://www.pyd.org).

