

Josie K. Vano

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Summary

Youth Theatre Educator and aspiring Expressive Arts & Drama Therapist dedicated to advancing accessibility in the arts

Education

JULY 2023 – MAY 2027

Master of Arts, Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Expressive Arts Therapy
Lesley University – Cambridge, MA

AUGUST 2021 – MAY 2023

Bachelor of Integrative Studies, Concentrations: Psychology, Theatre, ASL
Minor in Disability Studies and Community Inclusion
Cum Laude

Kent State University – Kent, OH

JANUARY 2020 – MAY 2021

Associate of Applied Science, American Sign Language Studies
Summa Cum Laude

Lakeland Community College – Kirtland, OH

JUNE 2010 – DECEMBER 2011

Certification, Nurse Aide – Advanced
Des Moines Area Community College – Newton, IA

Certifications

- Certificate in Devising Theatre for Social Justice, Fringe Benefits Theatre – April 2025
- Certified Family Peer Support, State of Ohio | License # FPS.000199 – October 2024
- Certified Ending the Silence Presenter, NAMI Ohio – October 2024
- Certified Basics Instructor, NAMI Ohio – September 2024
- Certified Connection Support Group Facilitator, NAMI Ohio – July 2024
- Certified Family Support Group Facilitator, NAMI Ohio – November 2021

Training/Workshops

- Creative Tools for Critical Times Master Class Series, *Fringe Benefits Theatre* – 2024 - 2025
- Managing Expectations: Rewriting the Fairytale, *Dr. Jamie Marich, LPCC-S, REAT* – 2024
- Motivational Interviewing: Skills for Families and Caregivers, *Madeline Hodgman Korth, MSSA, LISW-S* – 2024
- Trauma-Informed De-Escalation, *Dr. Rachel Weaver & Dr. Francine Packard* – 2024
- Trauma-Informed Facilitation for Theatre for Social Justice Practice, *Jenn Larsh* – 2023
- Compassion Without Rescuing: Best Practices for Social/Emotional Support and Growth in Theatre for Social Justice, *Erica Curtis, LMFT, ATR-BC* – 2023
- Theatre of the Oppressed, Forum Theatre Summer Intensive, *Just Act* – 2022
- Open Window: Poetry and Disability Justice, "The Flying Words Project," *Peter Cook & Kenny Lerner* – 2022
- V-A-R Training (Validate-Appreciate-Refer), *Active Minds* – 2021
- KSU Safe Space Ally Training, *Kent State LGBTQ+ Center* – 2021
- Disability Inclusion in the Workplace, *Understood* – 2021
- D&I Safe Zone Training, *The Safe Zone Project* – 2021

- Introduction to Psychodrama, *Barbara McKechnie, LPC, LCAT, RDT/BCT, TEP* – 2020
- Principles of Drama Therapy, *Creative Kinections* – 2020
- FLIP IT! Early Childhood Behavioral Management Training, *Crossroads Health* – 2014
- Bringing the Stage to Life: Performance Interpreting Workshop, *Gate Communications* – 2013
- OCRID Conference, “Try Walking a Mile in My High Heels” Interpreter Workshop, *Brenda Cartwright* – 2013

Languages

- English (native)
- American Sign Language (working proficiency)

Organizations – Current

- Educational Theatre Association
Pre-Professional Member, May 2025 - present
- Expressive Therapies Student Association
Expressive Arts Therapy Committee, December 2024 - present
- International Expressive Arts Therapy Association
Student Member, October 2023 - present

Organizations – Past

- Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
- Order of Omega Greek Honor Society
- Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, Alpha Beta Chapter
Housing Manager, 2022 - 2023
Honor Council Goals Coordinator, 2022
DEI Committee, 2022
Education Committee, 2022
Emerging Leaders Retreat Representative, 2022
- Psi Chi Honor Society, Kent State Chapter
Vice President, 2022 - 2023
- Deaf Access and Allyship Organization
Treasurer, 2022
- Alpha Psi Omega, Beta Psi Cast
- KSU Stage Managers Forum
- AMP (formerly Threads KSU)
- Transfer Advisory Council
- Student Mental Health Coalition
- Active Minds, Kent State Chapter
- Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Alpha Psi Rho Chapter
Chapter President, 2020 - 2021
- Lakeland Signers Club
Club President, 2020 - 2021
- Sigma Kappa Delta Honor Society, Lakeland Community College Chapter
Chapter President, 2020 - 2021
- Lakeland CC Emerging Leaders
- Honors Program, Lakeland Community College
- Inter-Club Council, Lakeland Community College
- Golden Key International Honor Society, Ashford University
- Noble Art Entertainment, Geneva, OH
- Porchlight Theatre Company, New York City, NY

Work Experience

FEBRUARY 2025 - PRESENT

Theatre Educator

Beck Center for the Arts – Lakewood, OH

- Led theatre experiences for a variety of age groups in diverse settings, including in-house educational workshops and on-site social enrichment groups for children and adults
- Instructed workshops for youth ages 2 – 7, with lessons focused on imaginative play, turn-taking, explorations of body and voice, and foundational elements of theatre, culminating in a final workshop performance for students’ families
- Instructed adults in a dual diagnosis recovery center, teaching foundational acting skills in a social enrichment group, with activities focused on community building, self-confidence, storytelling, and self-expression

JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025

Family Support Specialist, FSS Program

NAMI Lake County, OH – Painesville, OH

- Support, educate, validate, and advocate for families of children (birth to 21) who are engaged in multiple systems of care across Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, and Geauga counties
- Participate in quarterly cross-system meetings with county Family Children First Councils across the service area, sharing pertinent information with other service organizations and developing a referral network
- Developed MS Access database to track family information and advocacy needs, with companion user guide for FSS Team members
- Developing operational assets to establish foundational framework of the program, including new employee onboarding guide, consent to receive services form, release of confidential information form, and demographic information collection for responsive grant reporting

MARCH 2024 – PRESENT

Program Coordinator, ACES Creative Arts Club (Adolescent Support Group)

NAMI Lake County, OH – Painesville, OH

- Develop guidelines and meeting materials for NLCO's new ACES Creative Arts Club (Arts for Connection, Empowerment, and Support), teaching coping strategies and fostering peer-to-peer connection for middle school youth through creative arts activities
- Create arts-based lessons to demonstrate coping skills and encourage reflective discussion among participants, using a foundation of culturally responsive, trauma-informed SEL frameworks
- Establish tracking metrics and collect data on impact and outcomes to report to grant funders
- Lead and coordinate volunteer peer facilitators who co-instruct ACES sessions
- Establish relationship with local community programs and service providers to extend a continuity of care for youth and families engaged in mental health care and social support systems
- Facilitate peer-to-peer support groups as needed, serving individuals with mental health conditions, as well as families of individuals with mental illness and dual diagnosis
- Present *Ending the Silence* instruction to middle school youth, addressing topics of mental health first aid, signs of suicidal ideation, and strategies for connecting with and supporting peers in mental health crisis
- Collaborate with executive team and partner organizations to plan inaugural Brainwaves Youth Leadership Summit to educate Lake County youth in applying leadership skills in the context of mental health literacy and advocacy
- Serve as a staff representative on the Board Development Committee for the NLCO Board of Directors

DECEMBER 2023 – PRESENT

Accessibility Consultant & Educator

Freelance – Northeast OH

- Advise on accommodations for disabled individuals, helping them understand their rights and supporting their efforts to have their needs met in various settings
- Deliver tailored educational training sessions on disability awareness, inclusion, accommodations, legal rights and responsibilities, and other related topics as needed
- Provide one-to-one ASL tutoring sessions for students and community members

OCTOBER 2021 – PRESENT

Accessibility Consultant, Associate Theatre Artist & Grant Writer

Fringe Benefits Theatre Company – Los Angeles, CA

- Researched and developed grant proposals in alignment with Fringe's program objectives and funding needs
- Developed guidebook on including disabled performers in Theatre for Social Change workshops and other theatrical environments, based on research and other work produced by disabled theatre artists and performance groups working with disabled individuals

- Adapted educational material into workshop presented to Fringe theatre artists and emerging professionals during the 2024-2025 Masterclass Series
- Supported Masterclass participants with reported accessibility needs for each monthly workshop, providing accommodations and creative solutions as needed

JANUARY 2024 – MARCH 2024

Assistant Teacher, OST Program

Cleveland Play House – Cleveland, OH

- Planned and facilitated creative arts after-school programming with K-5 students to support students' social emotional learning experience & overall development while maintaining a positive classroom environment
- Supported OST Program Director in tracking student attendance, incident reports, and resource accounting
- Assisted community partners in facilitating after school programming to engage students in variety of learning opportunities

JANUARY 2022 – MAY 2023

Career Peer for Students with Disabilities

Kent State University Career Exploration and Development – Kent, OH

- Supported students with disabilities by providing information specific to their experiences, needs, and career goals
- Connected students with majors in the Social Services Career Community to resources for resumes, cover letters, interviews, and finding job and internships
- Hosted drop-in hours for students at the LGBTQ+ Center and online for resume and cover letter critiques and general career advice
- Curated newsletter material tailored to assigned student groups to support their unique career goals
- Presented career-focused lectures to a diverse population of students to supplement classroom instruction
- Researched best practices for meeting the career needs of college students with disabilities and collaborated with relevant departments in order to further develop CED programming for this population

OCTOBER 2019 – AUGUST 2021

Regulatory Compliance and Filings Analyst II

AmTrust Financial - Cleveland, OH

- Reviewed all proposed changes to AmTrust's insurance products for completeness and compliance
- Assembled, prepared, and submitted necessary materials needed by state Departments of Insurance to review and approve our product changes via industry portal
- Worked with internal stakeholders (product management, actuarial, IT) and state regulators to resolve Department of Insurance objections to our company's proposed insurance products
- As a member of AmWell Champions, presented for Wellness Wednesday in collaboration with team
- Helped initiate introduction of captioning to live webinar events, to promote accessibility for employees with auditory accommodations needs
- Assisted in visual design of the Compliance group Employee Recognition Program poster and individual employee tags, using AmTrust marketing assets and conducting a small corporate photoshoot
- Contributed additional support to Compliance department by undertaking additional roles and tasks, including the FR Task Group, compiling Professional Liability filing requirements into a user-friendly formal, and compiling department performance data

SEPTEMBER 2016 – SEPTEMBER 2019

Workers Compensation Data Processor

AmTrust Financial - Cleveland, OH

- Processed requested changes to Workers' Compensation insurance policies for small to mid-sized businesses
- Consistently maintained a productivity rate over 100%, with an average error rate below 1%

- Investigated and responded to inquiries from underwriters regarding policy changes and requests, explaining processes and providing solutions with clear language and professional courtesy
- Assisted leadership team as needed with special handling of Processing requests, managing specialized joint email inboxes, assisting in new hire interviews, and training team members on new transaction types
- Collaborated and cross-trained with multiple departments within Operations, including working closely with Documentation Specialist to review and edit new Processing manuals for content and clarity

NOVEMBER 2013 – AUGUST 2016

Highly Qualified Classroom Assistant

Mentor Exempted Village Public Schools - Mentor, OH

- Worked one-on-one with students with Autism spectrum disorder, for both academic and social needs
- Built rapport with students as both an educator and trusted adult
- Implemented classroom management strategies and provided individual attention to students
- Collected and reported daily data on student behavior and progress relative to IEP objectives

MAY 2013 – SEPTEMBER 2013

Income Maintenance Aide

Portage County Department of Job and Family Services - Ravenna, OH

- Answered customer inquiries regarding their public assistance via phone and in person, translating agency policies and practices into simple language
- Navigated efficiently within the statewide software system with command-line interface (CRIS-E, MAGI)
- Handled high volume of sensitive case documents, scanning these to imaging system and routing to caseworkers
- Maintained confidentiality regarding cases and clients, per state requirements and professional integrity

Internship Experience

OCTOBER 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2022

Intern and Support Group Facilitator

NAMI Lake County, OH - Painesville, OH

- Co-facilitated Return to Hope Family Support Group sessions, a new program unique to the Lake County affiliate supporting family members of individuals with co-occurring diagnoses with Substance Use Disorders
- Co-facilitated Family Support Group sessions, supporting family members of individuals with mental illness
- Co-instructed Return to Hope Education sessions, teaching family members of those with co-occurring diagnoses appropriate coping skills, and the psychological and physiological foundations of substance abuse
- Participated in facilitator trainings to develop support group management skills
- Provided feedback on NLCO's annual SWOT analysis

MAY 2022 – AUGUST 2022

Summer Intern

Cleveland Foundation – Cleveland, OH

- Partnered with small Cleveland non-profit host site, the Jarvis Gibson Foundation, while also participating in site visits, professional development sessions, and networking events with the Cleveland Foundation
- Assisted in curriculum development for Beyond the Field, an educational program focused on youth development through sports, by aligning program activities with Penn State's Developmental Assets for Positive Youth Development
- Researched and developed grant proposals to support host site programming, successfully raising funds for a new food access initiative for youth in Cleveland's Central neighborhood
- Supported operations development by creating foundational assets for the organization, including an interview rating template, internship onboarding manual, work plan and evaluation template, and social media strategy and guidelines

OCTOBER 2021 – OCTOBER 2022

Team Lead, Student Intern Team

Kent State University LGBTQ+ Center – Kent, OH

- Welcomed guests to the Center and tracked visits and length of stay for end of year data analysis
- Planned and assisted with programs hosted by the Center to provide students with education, support, and resources
- Provided peer-to-peer support for students seeking community and resources
- Piloted task management and organization software with Center staff, and created usage guide to support rollout to the team
- Organized memorial service for 2021 Transgender Day of Remembrance, including designing and distributing marketing materials, creating action cards for attendees, and day-of preparation and presentation
- Planned and hosted 2022 MLK Day event, including showing a film and leading a discussion about the Civil Rights Movement, Bayard Rustin, and intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities
- Planned and hosted roundtable discussion on the topic of family dynamics in the LGBTQ+ community
- Coordinated and managed production of “Battle for the Wagon Heel,” an annual fundraising drag show
- Led professional development sessions for interns based on data from NACE competencies self-assessments

Volunteer Experience

- 2024 – present, Education Director and Accessibility Coordinator, Youth Summer Theatre Camp – *Arlene’s Broadway on Buffalo*
- 2024, Awards Banquet Coordinator – *Arlene’s Broadway on Buffalo*
- 2023, Event Staff, NAMI Walks 2023 – *NAMI Lake County, OH*
- 2023, Trip Leader, Alternative Spring Break, “Creating Social Change through Art” in Utuado, Puerto Rico – *Kent State Community Engaged Learning*
- 2022, Alternative Spring Break, “Supporting the Unique Needs of Multi-Generational Communities” in Detroit, MI – *Kent State Community Engaged Learning*
- 2021, Herrick Conservatory Annual Cleanup– *Transfer Advisory Council*
- 2021 – 2022, Rainbow Run 5K – *Kent State LGBTQ+ Center*
- 2021, Construction Volunteer – *Habitat for Humanity*
- 2018 – 2020, Assistant Director – *Destination Imagination*
- 2018, Photographer – *Minds Matter Cleveland*
- 2013 – 2015, Polar Plunge Fundraiser Participant – *Special Olympics Ohio*
- 2006 – 2016, Volunteer Performer – *Great Lakes Medieval Faire*
- 2006 – 2007, Director’s Assistant, Children’s Theatre Project – *Newton Community Theatre*

Publications

- Vano, J.K. (2025) Devising Access: Creative Collaboration for Disability Inclusion. In A.E. Armstrong, N. Bowles & S. Jonas (eds.) *Creative Tools for Critical Times: Master Classes with Devised Theatre Innovators* (in press)
- Vano, J.K. (2021). Lacking Language: The Failure of Auditory-Oral Programs for Deaf Children. *Nota Bene Literary Journal*, Fall 2021

Honors – National/International

- Inductee: Order of Omega Greek Honor Society – 2022
- Recipient: Distinguished Honors in Action Project Hallmark Award for “Understanding Disability: Building a Legacy of Empathy and Equity,” *Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society* – 2021
- Inductee: Golden Key International Honor Society – 2014
- Inductee: Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society – 2010

Honors – Regional/State

- Recipient: All-Ohio Community College Academic Team – Second Team, *Ohio Association of Community Colleges* - 2021
- Recipient: Most Distinguished Officer Team Award, *Phi Theta Kappa Ohio Region* - 2021
- Recipient: Outstanding Honors in Action Project Award, *Phi Theta Kappa Ohio Region* - 2021
- Recipient: Outstanding Honors in Action Theme Award, *Phi Theta Kappa Ohio Region* - 2021
- Inductee: Order of Athena, *Phi Theta Kappa Ohio Region* - 2021
- Inductee: Order of the Torch, *Phi Theta Kappa Ohio Region* - 2021
- Nominee: Distinguished Chapter Officer Hallmark Award, *Phi Theta Kappa Ohio Region*, 2021

Honors – University/Local

- Nominee: Out and Proud Student Leader Award, *Kent State University LGBTQ+ Center* – 2023
- Recipient: Harry E. Jackson LGBT Endowment Fund Scholarship, *Kent State University LGBTQ+ Center* – 2022
- Recipient: Sue McConnell Member of the Year Award, *Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, Alpha Beta Chapter* – 2022
- Recipient: Ali Fuhrman Memorial Scholarship, *Kent State University Fraternity and Sorority Life* – 2022
- Recipient: Diversity Award, *Lakeland Community College* – 2021
- Recipient: Pioneer of the Year Award, *Lakeland Community College* – 2021
- Recipient: First Place, Celebration of Research Individual Category for “Providing Effective Mental Health Services for Deaf Patients in Ohio,” *Lakeland Community College Library* – 2021
- Recipient: First Place, Celebration of Research Group Category for “Understanding Disability: Building a Legacy of Empathy and Equity,” *Lakeland Community College Library* – 2021
With Kristel Champa and Elizabeth Brassell
- Recipient: Outstanding American Sign Language Student Award, *Lakeland Community College* – 2021
- Recipient: Member of the Year, Lakeland Signers Club, *Lakeland Community College* – 2021
- Recipient: Member of the Year, Phi Theta Kappa, *Lakeland Community College* – 2021
- Recipient: Member of the Year, Sigma Kappa Delta, *Lakeland Community College* – 2021

Presentations and Projects

- *Lunch ‘n Learn*, National Legal Aid & Defender Association: Presenter, “Disability Awareness” (April 2025)
With Anne Sweeney and Jennifer Kinsley-Smith
- *Brainwaves Youth Leadership Summit*, NAMI Lake County OH, YouthMove OH, and United Way of Lake County, “Mental Health Literacy Workshop” (April 2025)
- Expressive Therapies Student Association: Art Therapy Committee Event, Lesley University: Content Consultant and Guest Presenter, “For Everyone: A Zine Demo” (April 2025)
- Expressive Therapies Student Association: Expressive Arts Therapy Committee Event, Lesley University: Producer, “Living Community Mosaic: A Virtual Community Space for Rest and Creativity” (March 2025)
- *Creative Tools for Critical Times: Master Classes with Devised Theatre Innovators*, Fringe Benefits, “Devising Access: Creative Collaboration for Disability Inclusion” (January 2025)
- Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) – Conneaut Troop #80223, “Access for Everyone: Disability Awareness Workshop” (December 2024)
- NAMI Lake County OH, *Peer Leadership Education Series*, “LGBTQ+ Awareness Workshop” (April 2024)
- *Gabriel E. Gallardo Research, Student Leadership & Advocacy Symposium*, University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity: Student Research Presenter, “Accessing the Arts: Disability Inclusion in Theatre” (April 2023)
- Career Exploration and Development, Kent State University & Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities: CED Representative, “Jobs in Vocational Rehabilitation - Career Conversation & Employer Spotlight” (March 2022)

- *Animated Hands* Student Film Project, Kent State University: ASL Consultant (March 2023)
- Career Exploration and Development and Student Accessibility Services, Kent State University: Presenter, "Defining Your Strengths: Building Confidence for Self-Advocacy" (March 2023)
- Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, Alpha Beta Chapter: Presenter, "Implicit Bias: What You Need to Know for Recruitment" (August 2022)
- Kent State University Division of Student Affairs Annual Research Presentation, LGBTQ+ Center Researcher and Presenter, "Condom Distribution Program" (April 2022)
- Career Exploration and Development, Kent State University: CED Representative, "Jobs in Vocational Rehabilitation - Career Conversation & Employer Spotlight" (March 2022)
- LGBTQ+ Center, Kent State University: Panelist, "So Your Kid Came Out... Now What?" (March 2022)
- Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, Alpha Beta Chapter DEI Committee: Presenter, "Quick Guide to Social Media Accessibility" (March 2022)
- *Student Leadership Institute*, Kent State University: Presenter, "Articulating Your Skills" (February 2022)
- *Well-Being Wednesday*, AmTrust Financial: "Disability Inclusion in the Workplace" (November 2021)
- AmTrust Financial: "Disability Inclusion: A Proposal for Including Disability in Company-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Efforts" (August 2021)
- Lakeland Community College, Graduate Speaker (May 2021)
- *Celebration of Research*, Lakeland Community College Library: "Providing Effective Mental Health Services for Deaf Patients in Ohio" (March 2021)
- *Celebration of Research*, Lakeland Community College Library: "Understanding Disability: Building a Legacy of Empathy and Equity" (March 2021)
With Kristel Champa and Elizabeth Brassell
- *Together, We're Resilient* Video Series, Psi Beta Lakeland Community College Chapter: "Gratitude Journaling: Finding a Little Good in Every Day" (March 2021)
- Phi Theta Kappa - Alpha Psi Rho Chapter and Lakeland Community College: Panel Host, "Accessibility: Past, Present, and Future" (November 2020)
- *Balance Matters Event*, Lakeland Community College: "Journaling for Mental Health" (October 2020)
- *Well-Being Wednesday*, AmWell Champions at AmTrust Financial: "Mental Health and Journaling with Children" (August 2020)
With Sara A. Warner MPH, CHES, CPH
- *Ohio Chapter of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (OCRID) – Spring Conference*: Student Presenter, "Performance Interpreting" (March 2013)