

Josie K. Vano

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

Education

Lesley University
Master of Arts
May 2027
Clinical Mental
Health Counseling &
Expressive Arts Therapy

Kent State University
Bachelor of
Integrative Studies
May 2023
Cum Laude
Psychology, Theatre, ASL
Minor: Disability Studies and
Community Inclusion

Lakeland
Community College
Associate of
Applied Science
May 2021
Summa Cum Laude
American Sign Language Studies

Certifications

State of Ohio
Certified Family
Peer Supporter
October 2024
License # FPS.000199

Work Experience

Theatre Educator, Education & Creative Therapies Departments
Beck Center for the Arts

February 2025 – Present
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

Program Coordinator, ACES Creative Arts Club
NAMI Lake County, OH

March 2024 – Present
Painesville, OH

- Developed guidelines and meeting materials for NLCO's new adolescent group, ACES Creative Arts Club (Arts for Connection, Empowerment and Support), using creative arts activities to teach coping strategies and foster peer-to-peer connection for local middle school youth
- Created arts-based activities to demonstrate coping skills and encourage reflective discussion among participants, using a foundation of culturally responsive, trauma-informed SEL frameworks
- Developed Junior Peer Facilitator program for youth aging out of ACES demographic to promote ongoing engagement with programming and develop youth's leadership skills
- Planned and coordinated first annual Brainwaves Youth Leadership Summit, helping Lake County teens to develop leadership skills in the context of mental health literacy and advocacy
- Developed and led NLCO's new Youth Advisory Council, giving area youth a voice in NAMI programming, facilitating connection with the NLCO Board of Directors, and developing young leaders in mental health advocacy

Family Support Specialist, FSS Program
NAMI Lake County, OH

July 2024 – June 2025
Painesville, OH

- Supported, educated, and advocated for families of children (birth to 21) engaged in multiple systems of care across Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, and Geauga counties
- Developed MS Access database to track family information and advocacy needs, with companion user guide for team
- Produced employee procedural guide for incoming family advocates, detailing various processes in working with families
- Created data tracking systems for responsive grant reporting

Accessibility Coordinator, Associate Theatre Artist & Grant Writer
Fringe Benefits Theatre Company

October 2021 – Present
Los Angeles, CA

- Developed resources 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
- Adapted material into workshop to present to Fringe theatre artists and other professionals at Master Class symposium
- Attended workshops on leading Theatre for Social Change sessions with diverse audiences
- Reviewed Master Class applications for participant accessibility needs and ensured accommodations were available
- Researched and developed grant proposals in alignment with Fringe's program objectives and funding needs

Assistant Teacher, OST Program

Cleveland Play House

January 2024 – March 2024

Cleveland, OH

- Planned and facilitated creative arts after-school programming with K-5 students to support students' social emotional learning experience and overall development while maintaining a positive classroom environment
- Assisted community partners in facilitating programming to engage students in variety of learning opportunities

Career Peer for Students with Disabilities

Kent State University Career Exploration and Development

January 2022 – May 2023

Kent, OH

- Expanded career services programming for disabled students to address their specific needs, experiences, and career goals by collaborating with university partners and collecting feedback from students
- Advised students on developing resumes and cover letters, provided general career guidance, and connected students to resources for interviewing, applying to graduate school, and finding jobs and internships
- Presented career-focused lectures to a diverse population of students to supplement classroom instruction

Summer Intern

Cleveland Foundation

May 2022 – August 2022

Cleveland, OH

- Partnered with 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 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

Team Lead, Student Intern Team

Kent State University LGBTQ+ Center

October 2021 – October 2022

Kent, OH

- Planned and facilitated programs and events to provide students with education, support, and resources
- Provided peer-to-peer support for visitors to the Center seeking community and resources
- Led professional development sessions for interns based on data from NACE competencies self-assessments

Organizations and Involvement

Educational Theatre Association

Pre-Professional Member, May 2025 – present

Expressive Therapies Student Association (ETSA)

Expressive Arts Therapy Committee
Dec 2024 – present

International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA)

Student Member, Oct 2023 - present

McNair Scholars Program

Student Researcher, 2022 – 2023

Psi Chi Honor Society

Kent State Chapter
Vice President, 2022 – 2023

Alpha Psi Omega

Beta Psi Cast
2022 – 2023

Deaf Access and Allyship Organization

Kent State ASL Club
Treasurer, 2022

Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority

Alpha Beta Chapter
Housing Manager, 2022 - 2023
Honor Council Goals Coordinator, 2022
DEI Committee, Spring/Summer 2022
Education Committee, Spring 2022
Emerging Leaders Delegate, Spring 2022

Order of Omega

Omega Nu Chapter
2022 – 2023

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

Volunteer Experience

Arlene's Broadway on Buffalo

Youth Summer Theatre Camp
Education Director and Accessibility Coordinator,
July 2024 – present

Advisory Committee, July 2023 – present
Awards Banquet Coordinator, January 2024

NAMI Lake County, OH

NAMI Walks 5K
Event Staff, July - October 2023

NAMI Connection, Return to Hope
Support Group Facilitator & MH Educator,
October 2021 – March 2024

Kent State LGBTQ+ Center

Rainbow Run 5K
October 2021, October 2022

Kent State Community Engaged Learning

Utah, PR – Alternative Spring Break
Service Trip
Trip Leader, March 2023
Detroit, MI – Alternative Spring Break
Service Trip
March 2022

Kent State Transfer Advisory Council

Herrick Conservatory Cleanup
November 2021

Habitat for Humanity

Construction Volunteer, August 2021

Destination Imagination

Assistant Director, 2018 – 2020

Minds Matter Cleveland

Spring Gala Photographer, March 2018

Special Olympics Ohio

Polar Plunge
Fundraising Participant, 2013 – 2015

Great Lakes Medieval Faire

Volunteer Street Performer, 2006 – 2016

Newton Community Theatre

Children's Theatre Program
Director's Assistant, 2006 – 2007