

Information for Community Partners

This document was created to help our community partners better understand PHAME and the community we work with. If you have any questions, please contact Director of Performance & Partnerships RaChelle Schmidt at rschmidt@phamepdx.org.

What is PHAME?

PHAME is a fine and performing arts academy serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Offering three ten-week terms of arts-based classes each year, as well as a rigorous performance program, PHAME empowers students to learn new skills, take artistic risks, and build lasting relationships with people who share their experience of having a disability.

PHAME is built upon the belief that art is for everyone, and that our community is stronger when it champions opportunities for all. With that in mind, PHAME brings passion, joy, and rigor to arts education and performance.

Our Mission

PHAME empowers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to lead full, creative lives through arts education and performance.

Key talking points

Student-Centered

We are committed to shaping our programming around the voices, opinions and stories of our students. Students work on our staff and on our board, and student feedback drives class offerings and program development. The story of PHAME is the story of our students: their experiences, beliefs, desires, and achievements.

Teaching Artists

Our teachers, known as “Teaching Artists,” are professional artists, actors, movers, and musicians who come to PHAME to share their art forms with our students. While many organizations serving people with disabilities rely on disability specialists to offer simple arts programming, our Teaching Artists are practicing artists who receive training on differentiated instruction and accommodations.

Vision & Partnerships

We envision a future where people with disabilities are fully included in our society. With that in mind, we offer opportunities for local arts organizations to partner with us to learn about how they can better include and support people with disabilities, both on their staff and in their programming. In 2019 we completed a multi-year collaboration with Portland Opera that culminated in the creation of a full-length rock opera—*The Poet’s Shadow*—and we continue to partner with them with classes and workshops taught by their staff. We have an ongoing partnership with Oregon Ballet Theatre, with whom we offer an accessible Ballet class, and we have ongoing partnerships with Portland Art Museum, Artist Repertory Theatre, Chamber Music Northwest, among others. Partnership opportunities empower other organizations to learn about disability and how it serves a vital role in their equity and inclusion goals.

Our Community

We're a community—a place where people with disabilities come to connect, make friends, learn, and grow. Making lasting relationships is important for people with and without disabilities, and PHAME gives people with disabilities a place where they can spend time with people who share their lived experience.

Things to Keep in Mind

Adults, Not Kids

At PHAME, our students are adults ages 18 and up who are pursuing continuing education classes and performance opportunities. We often hear people with disabilities referred to as “kids,” an inappropriate infantilization for adults. *We ask that our community partners make sure to refer to our students as adults, not kids.*

Empowerment, Not Inspiration

People with disabilities are very often used as tools for inspiring people who don't have disabilities. Social media is full of examples of this: videos or posts that focus on the accomplishments of people with disabilities for the sake of making people without disabilities feel better about their lives. This is called “inspiration porn,” and it dehumanizes people with disabilities and defines them by their difference, rather than acknowledging it as one aspect of their full personhoods. At PHAME, we don't refer to our students as “inspiring;” they're pursuing their own empowerment by learning new things and expanding their knowledge and skills—something that everyone should have the opportunity to do.

We ask that our community partners avoid using the word inspiration in any context when discussing our organization, and instead focus on our students as individuals who are advocating for themselves and living their own unique lives. Additionally, we ask that our partners avoid language that implies that working with people with disabilities is “rewarding” or “heartwarming” for the people working with them. Instead, we hope that you will focus on our students themselves and the work they do here.

Disability Is Diversity

People with disabilities add to the diversity of our community. And yet, disability—both I/DD and physical disabilities—is so often left out of conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion. *We challenge our partners to add disability to their EDI conversations and to seek out opportunities to welcome people with disabilities into every level of their organizations.*

Is PHAME an Acronym?

PHAME was originally an acronym, but we stopped using the acronym because it no longer felt representative of who we are and what we do. Now we're just PHAME—no need to mention what it once stood for.

Find PHAME online!

Web: www.phamepdx.org

Facebook: @phamepdx

Instagram: @phamepdx