



Mieke Barette, Outreach & Student Recruitment Coordinator
 Faculty of Music, Wilfrid Laurier University
 519-884-0710 ext. 2492 or mbarette@wlu.ca

Kevin Crowley, Director
 Communications & Public Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University
 519-884-0710 ext. 3070 or kcrowley@wlu.ca

JULY 6, 2018 | 094-18

Laurier's inclusive Arts Express camp for children stages 25th anniversary performance

WATERLOO – They are kids who may feel on the margins at school and at typical summer camps. Now, the children with disabilities participating in Wilfrid Laurier University's [Arts Express](#) camp are preparing to take centre stage – literally.

This year is the 25th anniversary of Arts Express. Organized by Laurier's Music Therapy program in partnership with **KidsAbility**, the **University of Waterloo** and **Carousel Dance Centre**, the camp is a unique and often transformative learning experience both for the campers and the university students who facilitate it. The Early Childhood Education program at **Conestoga College** is also a founding partner of the program.

Arts Express is both an inclusive camp for children aged six to 14 and the culmination of a full-credit undergraduate course. Since early May, seven Laurier students and 12 Waterloo students have been studying music, visual arts, dance, drama and how to adapt all these creative activities to children with a wide range of abilities. During the camp, 23 volunteers, many of whom are former campers, will help the university students lead activities.

Of the 40 registered campers, 35 have exceptionalities – some are non-verbal, some use wheelchairs and some require one-to-one support all day. Some of the children are accompanied by siblings.

"It may take a little more support for some but everyone gets to participate in everything," said **Linda Gambell** (MMT '08), a Laurier music therapy instructor and supervisor who is coordinating the university course and is part of the team coordinating the camp. "Creative arts are about expressing yourself, so they get to go to camp and do that in a fun group setting as they sing, dance, play, make art, socialize and perform."

The campers spend four days, **July 9 to 12**, at KidsAbility's Waterloo site, where in addition to the creative arts activities, they will swim and play outside. On **Friday, July 13**, they will be at Laurier's [Faculty of Music](#) all day. In the morning, they will rehearse. In the afternoon, starting at **1:30 p.m.**, they will take the stage at Laurier's **Maureen Forrester Recital Hall**, where many great musicians have performed.

This year's final recital performance, which runs about an hour, will be a little different from previous years. In honour of the program's 25th anniversary, the campers will "travel in time" to revisit some of the previous years' themes, which include dinosaurs, sea creatures, wizards and eco-heroes. The show will also travel 25 years in the future to explore Arts Express in 2043.

The Arts Express final recital is free and open to the public, including members of the media. For information about the 2019 camp, contact artsexpress@wlu.ca.

– 30 –