

Dancing Together

Mother's pictures paint a thousand words.

In 2003, while pursuing her graduate degree in adult education, Candee Basford discovered image making as a way of exploring her experiences. She used fabric and watercolors to make rudimentary images on paper that reflected her experiences. "After graduation, I decided to keep going with the images," says Basford, who lives in rural Adams County. "I decided I would solidify them

Katie, who has Down syndrome. At age 28, Katie nullifies most people's perception of people with disabilities. She attends Southern State Community College, where she is pursuing an associate's degree, has her own apartment and is writing her own book, which she plans to title "Facing the Future." Katie is also an active public speaker and leadership trainer.

At first, Basford intended "We Dance

story," Basford says. "It represents the courage and transformation that came from Katie."

Basford hopes the book will help people have a greater sense of community and to become more accepting of others. "I want people to learn that getting to know someone and embracing someone in our community, who we may have excluded, may actually expand our world in ways that surprise us," she says. "It could make us all more and all wiser. I think there is a fear it will do somehow the opposite, that the Katies of the world will somehow diminish us, that her participation will make us less. But, in fact, we will become more. In other words, we don't become somebody different, we become somebody deeper. Katie uncovered something in me I didn't know existed."

As an advocate for inclusion, Basford says, "As long as people see inclusion as including broken people, people who are deficient, as being nice and letting those people in, it really misses the point." Instead, she says that inclusion is about community. To be inclusive, our community needs to ask "What do we currently believe and does that prevent us from valuing and welcoming all citizens?"

"We have to identify the gifts that people have to give and allow that contribution to be manifested in our communities and in our homes and in our schools," Basford says. "I believe that's a central component. If our perception of others doesn't change, then being inclusive is nearly impossible."

For more information about Candee and Katie Basford and "We Dance Together," visit www.wedancetogether.com.

— Kirstin Lindsey



"A Conversation with Katie" by Candee Basford

somehow or bring them together into something I could show other people."

After completing several drafts, Basford received a grant from the Ohio Arts Council and published her images in the form of a book of painted essays, "We Dance Together," in 2005. The images focus on Basford's journey with her daughter,

Together" to be entirely visual. But when her fellow students in a local art class didn't understand the messages her paintings conveyed, Basford found herself adding words to the images. She realized that sometimes visual images don't connect with people and that her experiences with Katie aren't in the mainstream, so not everyone has had similar experiences. "The book means my own courage to share my personal