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H'ART CENTRE

Statement by:

The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

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Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, we have all experienced inspirational moments, known inspirational people and participated in inspirational organizations and events. The memories remain with us, guiding us in new directions, making us increasingly aware of waters we may not have fully understood or appreciated. Inspiration opens our eyes to the way people face their challenges.

As we honour Mental Health Month, I celebrate Kingston's H'art Centre, whose members are in the gallery today. H'art does inspirational work, delivering high-quality arts and education programs for adults with developmental disabilities, both intellectual and physical, including those with hearing disabilities, Down syndrome and more.

Founded in 1988 by artist Katherine Porter, the H'art school program has positively affected individuals, families and communities for 20 years. H'art gives participants a chance to build literacy and social skills as they engage in music, theatre, visual art, dance, media arts and literary arts, all in their fully accessible building. Thousands of pieces of artwork have been created, and their annual on-stage performances of original musicals have been seen by many.

Ten days ago, I was fortunate to attend this year's multidisciplinary performance of *A Gift From Martadella*. Working with professional artists, musicians and actors, the

participants presented a truly touching and inspirational performance. Some acted on stage. Others participated digitally, having been filmed putting toppings on pizzas in the local pizza restaurant. Some danced; some sang. Some had significant lines, and others played in the orchestra alongside professional musicians.

In H'art's two decades, they have written and illustrated children's books, and a few students have taken part in Queen's University's inclusive higher-education programs.

H'art recently developed a program in which professional artists of various disciplines go into senior's homes, encouraging engagement and participation in creative expression. As H'art says, "... to create a meaningful, inclusive environment for all participants where creativity is fostered in a supportive and positive space ... It is never too late ... to engage in something new and master a skill ... [By] bringing arts to our seniors ... [we hope] we will be able to enhance their quality of life, provide something fun to look forward to each week and help them to continue living their lives to the fullest."

I commend everyone involved in H'art. Their work is uplifting, colourful and joyful. The performance was excellent, five stars, in my view, and truly inspirational.

Congratulations on two decades of hope, joy, community commitment and giving gifts of vitality and dedication. These creative innovators are leaders at home and across the country.