

## CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

*The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.  
It is not for you (the adult/teacher) to choose what he (or she, the learner) shall know, what he shall do.  
It is chosen and foreordained, and only he holds the key to his own secret.      Ralph Waldo Emerson*

CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS is an umbrella. This umbrella is broad enough to cover my life and career choices. It enables me to help other people in many different ways to achieve whatever they choose for themselves in life. It is an attitude. It is an approach that focuses on the physical, social, intellectual, and personal environment for learning rather than on any curriculum. It is an understanding that each individual must be at the very center of any truly effective learning.

As an exercise for teachers, I often give each person a cup or a jar filled with different kinds of seeds. I ask the teachers first to think about and then to write a “curriculum” or plan for growth for each of the seeds. A successful gardener must first learn the specific requirements of each seed such as the amount of water needed and the frequency of watering, the duration of heat or cold, the amount of sunlight or darkness needed, the special nutrients for the soil, etc. Each seed is different, and if the maximum growth and productivity are to be achieved, careful attention to specific individual differences and needs is required.

For me, a meaningful career choice is one that involves self-initiative, self-direction, social responsibility, independence, and unlimited income potential. Therefore, I am a self-employed Networker, who brings together diverse groups of people in the areas of health through nutrition, art, autism, giftedness, athletic performance, filmmaking, and creativity.

CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS is dedicated to helping people achieve, through their own conscious choices, a path in life that is personally fulfilling, socially responsible, and financially rewarding. The accomplishment of this goal has led me to be:

- 1) an educator: a teacher, an adjunct professor, consultant, and mentor
- 2) an independent sales leader with the Shaklee Corporation [www.shaklee.net/labco](http://www.shaklee.net/labco)
- 3) an athlete and coach: tennis (over 60 years), soccer (official over 20 years)
- 4) a film producer and distributor of an international, award-winning documentary film, WITH EYES WIDE OPEN

These are some of my choices.

What do you choose to achieve with your life?

The choices are yours. You can choose health or sickness, happiness or disappointment, wealth or just getting by, fulfillment or emptiness, unlimited earning potential with self-promotions or a fixed uncertain salary determined by someone else.

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If you would like to explore your options, please contact me:

Dr. Laurence A Becker received his Ph.D. in 1980 from the Union Institute & University. He has worked with autistic savant artists Richard Wawro, Scotland (since 1976), Christophe Pillault, France (since 1996), Ping Lian, Malaysia (since 2005), and Rohan Sonalker, India (since 2008). He has worked (since 1992) with prodigy, Marshall Ball, author of KISS OF GOD, The Wisdom of a Silent Child, (1999). In 2000 Dr. Becker directed an International Gathering of Savants. He has served on numerous Ph.D. committees as an adjunct professor in such areas as creativity, art therapy, psychology, the humanities, and education. His publications include poems, essays, books, and film: “The Discovery of Pattern: ‘The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,’ ‘Katherine Ann Porter; ‘A Threat or an Invitation’”; Characteristics and Identification of Gifted and Talented & Program Design and Development of Gifted and Talented with Dr. Fredrick Tuttle; With Eyes Wide Open (international, award-winning documentary film); “Foreword” for Kiss of God, Marshall Ball; “A Way of Seeing” (film course exploring the gifts of extraordinary people); “Autism and Nutrition” in The Official Autism 101 Manual; “Gifts Along the Spectrum: The Portrayal of Disability in Film” in KALEIDOSCOPE Magazine; and “Living in the Spectrum” a Mindscape Productions audio CD.

## FOUR SAVANTS AND A PRODIGY SEEING: BENEATH AND BEYOND

*What is savant syndrome? Savant Syndrome is a rare, but spectacular, condition in which persons with various developmental disorders, including autistic disorder, have astonishing islands of ability, brilliance or talent that stand in stark, markedly incongruous contrast to overall limitations.* [www.savantsyndrome.com](http://www.savantsyndrome.com), Darold A. Treffert MD

**RICHARD WAWRO** was born in Scotland, April 14, 1952, with cataracts in both eyes and severely developmentally delayed. He had a series of needling operations within the first six months to allow light to reach the retina. Very early in life he was diagnosed with lympho-sarcoma and received massive radiation therapy. He was also diagnosed as severely and profoundly mentally retarded. At seventeen he was diagnosed as diabetic and received daily insulin shots the rest of his life. Because of his limited vision, he worked just a few inches from the paper to produce his beautiful landscapes. His sole medium was wax-oil crayons. He was fascinated by light and shadows. Dr. Laurence A. Becker introduced his original art to the United States in 1977, at a conference on Creativity for the Gifted and Talented in New York City. In 1979, Richard made his first of many trips to the US when he was the only artist having a major exhibition during the International Special Olympics in Brockport, NY. His art received many international awards, including 1st prize in the National Exhibits by Blind Artists, the Harmarville International Art Exhibition, and the Sister Kenny International Art Exhibition. He often toured in the United States and Europe. His last exhibition in the United States was in 2004 during the International Very Special Arts Festival in Washington, D.C. With Eyes Wide Open, an international, award-winning documentary film had its world premiere in 1983. Richard's art is included in the permanent collection of the M.I.N.D. Institute. [www.mindinstitute.org](http://www.mindinstitute.org) His art may also be seen at his web site [www.wawro.net](http://www.wawro.net) and [www.savantsyndrome.com](http://www.savantsyndrome.com). Richard passed away February 22, 2006 of cancer. He was 53. His life and art were an inspiration for people, young and old, throughout the world.

**CHRISTOPHE PILLAULT** was born in Iran, April 2, 1982. He now lives in France. An autistic savant, he is unable to talk, walk, or feed himself. He discovered painting in 1993, using his hands though unable to use his fingers functionally. His capacities were discovered by his special education teacher and then encouraged by his mother. A singular figure in art, he paints with his hands and uses acrylic on paper, canvas, and cardboard. Dr. Becker also first introduced Christophe's art to the United States in 1998, at the Mills Pond House Gallery in Smithtown, Long Island, NY. His paintings are striking due to the imaginary, fascinating, and at times mystic characters represented. It appears that he is painting ethereal beings. Christophe has exhibited throughout France, Italy, Japan, and the United States. One of his paintings was featured on the cover of the program for the 2003 DAN (Defeat Autism Now) Conference. His art is included in the M.I.N.D. Institute permanent collection and in the book ART OF THE M.I.N.D. See [www.savantsyndrome.com](http://www.savantsyndrome.com) & [www.dialogueautisme.org](http://www.dialogueautisme.org).

**PING LIAN YEAK** was born in Malaysia, November 18, 1993. His artwork stands on its own demonstrating a remarkable artistic ability for one so young. His drawings are colorful, cheerful, and impressive. He was diagnosed at age four as having ADHD with autistic features. Initially he had very poor fine motor control, but his mother started him tracing and coloring as a daily part of his training. He has limited communication and social skill. His advanced artistic skill, in addition to providing beautiful art, serves as a source of satisfaction, development and growth for him, helping eventually to minimize whatever limitations might spring from his disabilities. Dr. Rosa Martinez and Dr. Becker first introduced his original art to the United States in January 2006, in an exhibition at the Henry Gregg Gallery in Brooklyn and Cooper Union University in Manhattan.

Examples of his art may be seen at [www.pinglian.com](http://www.pinglian.com), [www.savantsyndrome.com](http://www.savantsyndrome.com), and [www.autismarts.com](http://www.autismarts.com).

**ROHAN SONALKER** was born in India, August 25, 1971. After a childhood in the Himalayan village of Tezpur, Rohan regressed into a recluse. With speech that was monosyllabic and a poor concept of social norms or money, Rohan needed assistance whenever he went outside his home to avoid being misunderstood. He was denied access to mainstream schooling, as special schools were not in existence at the time. Rohan was 18 before he was diagnosed as autistic. Little was known about autism in those years. In fact, autism was not officially recognized as a disability in India until 1999. Rohan compensated for the limitations imposed on him by society with the pleasure he derived from drawing. Fortune favored him with an art teacher, Mr. Bal Wad, who accepted Rohan unconditionally and gave him the encouragement and the environment needed to empower Rohan and, especially, his art. Rohan was featured prominently in the award-winning video by the Pune University's Electronic Media Research Centre. He was invited to display his works at the Queen's Gallery of the British Library, New Delhi, and at the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune. Rohan's work was first exhibited in the USA in Pittsburgh. Rohan had a phenomenal memory, able to recall audiovisual details from distant years past. Rohan passed away on March 30, 2007, after a sudden stroke, leaving behind a legacy of vibrant paintings some of which may be accessed via his website: <http://www.sonalkar-art.com/>. His life and art serves as an inspiration to others like him at home and abroad.

For information about these four savants contact: [rbecker64@aol.com](mailto:rbecker64@aol.com).

**MARSHALL STEWART BALL**, a prodigy, arrived July 26, 1986, the first son of Charles and Troilyn Ball. Marshall is a profound thinker and writer who wishes to share his wisdom with the world. While he does not speak, the words he writes are eloquent and serve to teach each and every one of us who will take the time to listen. He writes his poetry with the assistance of someone supporting his elbow as he points with his whole hand to individual letters on an alphabet board. Another person then transcribes the letters. A single poem may take up to one hour to complete. In 1992, his writings were first shared with the public in a series of six cards at the TAGT Conference when he was only six years old. One title, "My Harmony Prevails to Free," continues to amaze. In 1999 Kiss of God, The Wisdom of a Silent Child was published by HCI with an initial printing of 50,000 copies. In the first three months over 200,000 copies were sold. In 2001, a second book, A Good Kiss, The Wisdom of a Listening Child was published.

Contact Marshall at [www.marshallball.com](http://www.marshallball.com)