

a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

[Graphic recording helps others express what they cannot say in words.]



“Pictures and images can say things that words often fail to convey,” explains Brittany Curry, owner of InkyBrittany, a graphic facilitation company based in Savannah. Graphic facilitation, also known as graphic recording, is the visual element that is often missing from many meetings and workshops today, says Curry. “Most organizations spend a good deal of time planning and talking about big ideas, but when the meeting is over, people forget a lot of what was said and fall right back into a familiar routine,” she says.

Thus, her role as that of a graphic recorder is to capture the contents of a meeting visually on a large piece of paper, which can then be photographed or displayed to serve as memorable documentation for the participants, as well as others who couldn’t attend the meeting.

Curry says this communication through the use of pictures can be much more effective than more traditional formats. “We are able to see patterns that exist much more accurately through visuals rather than through dialogue,” she says. A life-long doodler, Curry now “uses deep listening to create visual imagery to help individuals, businesses and organizations improve upon their processes and outcomes.”

Curry says her love of all things visual and artistic began while spending time at her family’s business. “I grew up in Savannah with my grandparents, who owned their own dry cleaning business. I was always surrounded by pens, paper and tablets as a kid, so it was natural

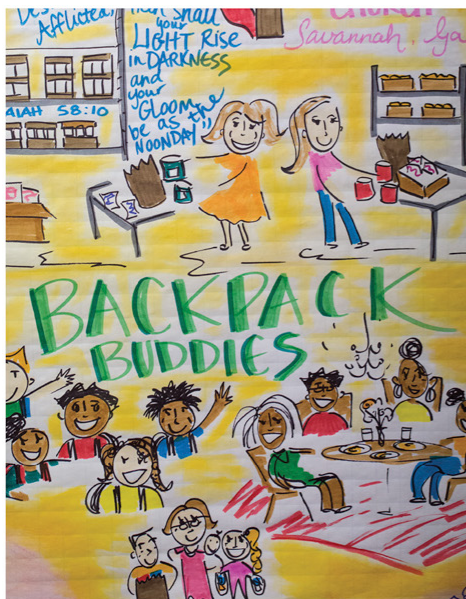




for me to take up doodling to pass the time,” she says. While attending Calvary Day School, she loved to write, doodle and draw cartoons for her friends and teachers. “I’ve never had any art classes beyond high school, but I’ve always loved to sketch and write,” she says. “Over the years, I started seeing that pictures and images can often say things that words can’t.”

After high school, Curry attended Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in Liberal Studies with a concentration in philosophy and rhetoric. “In addition to drawing, I’ve always had a passion to write, but when I got to college and saw how the process was taught and evaluated, the formality of it all turned off my creative juices in terms of writing. That may explain why I’ve now leaned toward the visual world,” she says.

After college, Curry traveled to India to complete an internship with a women’s empowerment organization called Badlav Ki Aur, which helps to foster children’s literacy as well as cultural exchange. This is where she gained some hands-on training for what would ultimately be part of her chosen vocation. “In India, I really learned a lot about grassroots organizing when I worked for the



Learning A World Away

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women’s empowerment group, so that’s where my interest in community activism began,” Curry says.

Additionally, in 2012 Curry had a fateful meeting with Margaret Chambliss, longtime coordinator for the Oconee Area Citizen Advocacy program, a grassroots community organization seeking to unite people with disabilities with other residents who are capable of speaking up for them, while also helping them become more involved in their community. “Her job involved breaking down walls of social exclusion that many people with disabilities continue to experience,” Curry said.

That year, Curry also attended a workshop at the Toronto Summer Institute for Inclusion, where she first learned about graphic recording, the use of large-scale visual imagery to communicate to groups and individuals. “I took a class in graphic recording,” she says. “I learned that graphics had been used in the advocacy world for years because it allows the person to visually see their whole life instead of (just one aspect of it).”

With the help and encouragement of Chambliss, Curry ultimately became the director of the Citizen Advocacy program in Milledgeville. “In my five years working for

the Advocacy office, part of my job was to educate the advocates about disability awareness and basically support them in their advocacy relationship,” Curry says. “One way was by sending them a card or note that often included some sort of sketch I’d made. It was my way of saying that I was here for them. That was when I first started seeing how powerful pictures can be and how effective images are in terms of conveying a message.”

During the next several months, Curry began implementing her new-found graphic recording skills during meetings with various civic organizations, such as Emergent Savannah and the Savannah Development and Renewal Authority. “Basically, if I was available for a meeting, I would ask to come and provide my services. Sometimes I was paid, sometimes not,” she says with a laugh.

The response was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic, and soon enough the network of people requesting her services necessitated the creation of her business, InkyBrittany. She became so busy that in November 2016 she decided to leave her position at the Citizen Advocacy office and pursue graphic facilitation

full-time. “After the meetings, I would truly feel a sense of accomplishment, knowing that I helped bring people to a new place in their lives. I also felt really proud to build on a continuum of work (in this medium) that was laid out decades before I started and updating it for today’s audiences. That’s when I knew I had to do this,” she says.

Still very active in the disability advocacy community in Savannah and around the state, Curry helps galvanize support for self-advocates, helping them pursue homes, careers and fully integrated social lives. Curry explains, “I basically see myself as a visual communicator. When I create that vision of a person’s life in front of them, it’s amazing how it really amps up the process, as opposed to just telling them a standard plan. They become really excited because they can actually see the outcome rather than talk about it. They love seeing their caricature and quotes brought to life; it really helps to unlock their emotions, and they get passionate about their goals.”

Curry’s expertise is not just limited to citizen advocacy. “I also help businesses,



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universities and other organizations achieve different outcomes, but in the same way – by basically putting their goals or plans into a visual format to help them actually see the process,” she says.

Kesha Carter of the Coastal Empire’s Rape Crisis Center lauds the process, adding, “(Graphic recording) is such a great tool that allows an audience to engage, as well as to see the results of their dialogue. We were also able to set those tangible goals in the form of a living document that serves as a reminder, holding (the meeting’s attendees) accountable for their goals.”

As for the future, Curry sees a shift in the way that all organizations conduct meetings and plan their seminars, and she’s excited to be part of it all. “Anyone who is thinking about using graphic facilitation is on the sharp edge of where we’re headed in the next few years. We’ve already seen the shift toward a more visual society. I’m just glad to be participating in the movement, and I’m ready to see where it takes us from here.” † CCL

