More than 350 guests decked out in tie-dye and jeans attended Hoodstock XIV, the family-friendly music festival fundraiser held in October at the American Visionary Arts Museum. Bands included returning headliner Roses n’ Rust along with The Walloppers and 33 West. Music featured classic artists from the 1960s and 70s with a splash of contemporary. Dinner, beer, wine, raffles and a silent auction added to the fun. Hoodstock began in 2004 as a neighborhood event and has since grown into a major fundraiser for Unified Community Connections. Hoodstock XIV raised a record-breaking $81,500.

Baltimore Ravens Senior Advisor for Player Development and Unified’s board member CJ Briggance presented this year’s Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award to Nelson Fuentes, praising him for being a positive role model, even as he continually works to improve his independence. Unified’s CEO Diane Coughlin spoke about the meaning of this award and how Samuel Tucker exemplifies how we are defined by our abilities not our disabilities. Nelson thanked the many people who have supported him, changed his life and allowed him to become the person he is today.

A special shout out to Hoodstock chair Russ Causey and his committee, Kathy Bradley, Barry Brill, Lauren Bussard, Nick Richardson and Carol Sholes. Many thanks to the Unified staff and volunteers, our generous sponsors and everyone who supported this year’s event.

Save the date for next year, Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018, at the American Visionary Arts Museum.
This year’s 2017 Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award winner is Nelson Fuentes, who currently participates in Unified Community Connections’ Supported Employment Program in Hagerstown. Nelson was nominated because he has overcome many challenges in his life, yet continues to maintain a positive attitude and extraordinary work ethic.

He began receiving residential services from another provider at a young age, and there were times in his past where Nelson got involved with the wrong crowd, but through guidance and support, he learned from those experiences, and made positive changes to improve his adult life.

Today, Nelson is a very kind and helpful person, and he continues to work very hard to maintain his independence. He currently lives independently with his dog Chico in his own apartment with supports in place. He works at Tony’s Pizza in Williamsport, where he is known for being dedicated to his job and completing all his shifts and duties as assigned. His supervisor Jim gives glowing reviews on his work ethic and performance.

Having overcome much adversity to successfully integrate into his community, Nelson is a positive role model for others and continues to work towards more independence. In fact, he is currently working on getting a moped license to improve his mobility and freedom. Congratulations, Nelson – we applaud your efforts to live your best life!

The fifth session of the John Stanley III Memorial PDA Mentor Program graduated three Professional Development Associates (PDAs) in August: Amanda Kruse, Cumberland Residential Program; Eugene Djoumbou Limou, Frederick Residential Program; and Samantha Murray, Hagerstown Day Program. Through this six-month mentoring program, Day Program and Residential PDAs gain one-on-one practical training and managerial skills to advance professionally within the field and move into higher positions in the agency. This program is funded by Nancy and Snowden Stanley in memory of their son, John, who received support from Unified.

Let your wheels help turn our wheels... Let your wheels turn our wheels when you donate your car or vehicle to help children and adults with disabilities in Maryland. Unified Community Connections has a vehicle donation program that helps connect people with disabilities to life’s possibilities through our adult day programs, residential homes, employment opportunities, and the Delrey School. Cars, vans, trucks and other vehicles are accepted, and we provide free towing. Donating your vehicle may also be tax deductible. It’s easy to donate your vehicle.

Just call 1-800-4Wheels today or donate online by visiting www.unified.org and clicking on vehicle donation.