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LIFE & ARTS

Celebrating works of art

Artists from TotalLink2 Community display work at Northbrook Village Hall, Page 37

Northbrook Village President Sandy Frum joins artists and officials from TotalLink2 Community, a Northbrook-based nonprofit that helps individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, during a celebration of a new art exhibit that is now open at Northbrook Village Hall. PHOTO SUBMITTED

COVER STORY

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TotalLink2 Community artists showcase work

Nonprofit's exhibit on display at Village Hall until March

ELIZABETH MANASTER
Freelance Reporter

Art embellishes our lives and brings beauty to our surroundings, and in the words of the great artist Pablo Picasso, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up."

This is often a problem indeed, but many budding young artists here in Northbrook are being assisted in the process.

TotalLink2 Community, a Northbrook-based nonprofit that helps individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, is working hard to build a bridge from childhood creativity into the real world of working artists. With the help of The Northbrook Arts Council and the Village of Northbrook, an exhibit of artists' work is now on display and available for purchase at the Village Hall boardroom through the end of March.

"TotalLink2 Community is honored to have been invited to have our artists' work displayed in the Northbrook Village Hall Board Room," said Alisa Martorano, Director of Development.

John Felageller, Education and Social Programs Manager for Total Link worked diligently with Kathleen Heittman, ArtLab for EveryONE Facilitator and teacher, along with Cheryl Fayne-dePersio, of the Village, to collate and coordinate the hanging of the artwork of thirteen young artists from Northbrook and the surrounding suburbs.

The artists are: Allissa Brandell, Evan Ernsteen, Justice Peters-Farrell, Nina Santarose, Zach Shultz, Daniel Raviv, Josh Ernsteen, Naomi Talsky, Sarah Weinstein, Amara Hans, Frankie Crist, Matt Delacy and Sam Needleman.

"Being asked to showcase their art at the Northbrook Village Hall gives the artists the opportunity to be part of the Northbrook Arts Commission, a fellow group of artists," said Emily Raming. Executive Director of TotalLink2 Community. "Having the Northbrook Village President Sandy Frum attend the opening reception, says to me, 'Northbrook wants you here, you belong,' and that's a feeling everyone wants."

"Part of what we do here at TotalLink2 Community is provide opportunities for people to explore and discover things about themselves that they might not know. Our ArtLab for EveryONE class is a natural way to give the young adults an outlet to be creative."

TotalLink's ArtLab for EveryONE is an inclusive community of emerging and established artists that nurtures individual and group creativity, self-expression and personal growth by sharing and creating art. Taking a personalized approach to creativity, the self-paced learning encourages students to select their subject and choice of medium. The students are provided with support that enables them to feel successful yet challenged. Mistakes are reframed as possibilities for learning and problem-solving. The ArtLab encourages risk-taking through mentorship, guest artists and opportunities to try new things.

A dynamic hub for creativity, ArtLab for EveryONE promotes self-expression and builds confidence, a critical life skill for young adults living with disabilities who are often isolated at home due to a lack of vocational and social opportunities. While 85 percent of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are unemployed, ArtLab for EveryONE gives young adults the opportunity to display and sell their artwork both online and through community outreach.

"I believe it is important that the artists feel a commonality in society," said Kathleen Heitmann, ArtLab Facilitator. "Being an active part of the community gives them the chance to share their talents yet also the confidence and encouragement that they belong and deserve recognition, a feeling of fellowship with others, and sharing common attitudes and interests."

"Art is about self-expression. Our artists' feelings are translated into their works of art. This allows them to experience more acceptance, awareness and pride within themselves. When they work on their art, they are also communicating their uniqueness. It is a privilege watching them grow as artists each week. Although I have noticed, it's not only about their artwork. It's also about their growth as young adults in this big world of ours."

For more information or to inquire about purchasing artwork, visit www.totallink2.org.

TotalLink2 Community artist Zack Schultz shows off his work of art Thursday, Feb. 6, at Northbrook Village Hall during a opening celebration of the Northbrook-based nonprofit's new art exhibit. PHOTO SUBMITTED