

Thursday, May 7, 2009

Seniors art shows talent in use of color, line

By AMY LAVALLEY
Post-Tribune correspondent

Judy Bornstein jokes she couldn't draw a straight line with a ruler, and hadn't colored since she used crayons in second grade. Then Bornstein, a resident of the Meridian Woods retirement community in Valparaiso, took an art class called "Drawing from Scratch for Scaredy Cats." The title made her laugh out loud and gave her the motivation to show up. The class started meeting once a week in January in the Meridian Woods café under the tutelage of local artist Suzie Rosso. The free class was supposed to last six weeks, but is still meeting weekly. "This has been the most fun surprise," Bornstein, 72, said. "It was very interesting. I had no idea I was going to do anything like that."

Bornstein is one of 33 artists whose work is on display through the end of this month at the Christopher Center Library at Valparaiso University. All are students of Rosso, and all, like Bornstein, took up art through her classes.

A \$1,000 "Jumpstart the Conversation" grant from the Aging In Place Initiative a year ago provided the supplies for the art classes, said Laurie Mullet, chief executive officer of Pines Village Retirement Communities.

In all, more than 40 people enrolled in art classes at Meridian Woods, the Village Park Enrichment Center at Banta, and Pines Village Retirement Communities, all in Valparaiso. The program encourages new cultural opportunities and gives people the chance to work on their weaknesses, Mullet said.

"It's just quite incredible. These are people who have true artistic talent and never tapped into it," Mullet said, adding many of the artists are in their 70s, 80s and 90s.

Taking a break from helping set up the 125 pieces in the exhibit, Rosso said her class focused on the five components of drawing: perception of lines; perception of negative space; proportion; perspective; and value.

"Most of the people had never drawn or painted before," Rosso said, adding one woman, 94, mixed yellow and red paint together for the first time.

Those in the classes credit Rosso's approach with bringing out their inner-artist. Elizabeth Sukovich, who is in her 50s and from Valparaiso, and Kathy Elkins, 65, of Morgan Township, both took Rosso's class at Banta.

Neither had taken art classes before and both admit they are now hooked.

"Suzie brings out art we never thought of doing," Sukovich said, adding she views things differently now and always has a sketchpad with her.

Added Elkins, "I never thought I could draw. Never. I surprised myself."



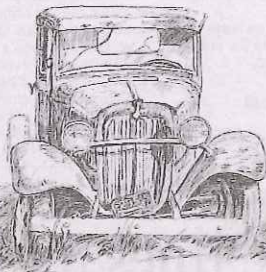
Susan Rosso, art instructor, sorts out the paintings of the residents of the Pines Village Retirement community, which will be displayed all month in the Gallery of the Christopher Center on the Valparaiso University campus.

LESLIE ADKINS/POST-TRIBUNE

Flower picture:
Judy Bornstein

Car picture:
Ron Sinclair

Picture of person
drawing a shell:
Ann Burgess



PROVIDED PHOTO