

Exploring creativity through art at Southington Care Center

Painting, poetry and patchwork are opening a whole new world for residents of the Southington Care Center, giving them the means to further express themselves and explore their creativity.

Many of these artists had never had this experience because of careers and family obligations. Now, in this new chapter they are creating vibrant paintings, heartfelt writings and other art. A bi-monthly poetry group has also taken off.

In conjunction with Southington's 2013 Apple Harvest Festival artistic component, "Harvest the Arts," the care center presented its own program. "Timeless Creativity, Arts through the Ages" was an afternoon of wisdom, words and works featuring poetry readings of original and favorite works, paintings in a variety of mediums, "remember when" stories, and quilts and needlework. Family members also brought items that had been created by some residents prior to their moving to the care center.

"Art is an expression of self and it empowers residents with independence and control," said Stacy Carleton, supervisor of therapeutic recreation.

One woman's son was stunned to see his mother's new painting and never knew she was interested, especially since now she is non-verbal. "She never painted in her life," he told Stacy. To make it easier for some to create, adaptive means are used. "The creativity is in there. We want them to have the means to bring it out," Stacy said.

The arts initiative has also stimulated conversation and interest in prior hobbies and passions while fueling new interests. "We can continue to learn every day," Stacy said.

Care center resident Joan LaRose has loved poetry and its power of expression since she was a girl. The poetry group is a wonderful outlet, she said. She was stirred to pen "Changes" about her own challenges in life. "I miss what I used to be able to do but now I have another avenue. Poetry is my survival mechanism and gives me a way to communicate," Joan said.

Due to the success of "Timeless Creativity," plans were being made for a second event to be held in conjunction with the 2014 Apple Harvest Festival.

"Art is timeless," Stacy said. "We want every person to experience it."