

# Neighbor & Classifieds

## 'Awaiting Spring'

*Spring-themed artwork by Marklund clients on display, up for auction*

Many of us anxiously await spring, but maybe not as much as some artists at Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva.

The developmentally disabled residents, students and clients at Marklund in Geneva spent time during the holidays creating six of 13 paintings that three Marklund centers completed with an "Awaiting Spring" theme for display in the 737 N. Michigan Ave. office complex lobby in Chicago.



Dave Heun  
*Talk of the Town*

The work that therapists at Geneva, the Marklund Wasmond center in Elgin and Marklund Philip Center in Bloomington oversaw with Marklund children and adults will be on display at the building, which houses a Neiman Marcus store and various offices. The art will be on display through March.

In the meantime, these interesting creations are available through an online bidding process as a fundraiser for Marklund at [bidpal.net/737artexhibit](http://bidpal.net/737artexhibit) through May.

The opportunity for the art display came about through Live Art International and CBRE, a longtime supporter



The "Water Lilies" painting is one of six pieces of art that students and residents at Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva created for a display in the lobby of the Neiman Marcus building at 737 N. Michigan Ave. in Chicago.

of Marklund. Live Art International was collaborating with CBRE, a real estate and investment firm, about the need for a new set of artwork, which it rotates after a few months, in its building lobby. Live Art suggested Marklund.

"Our residents have been commissioned to do art before, about eight years ago from a donor we have a

relationship with when he was opening a new business, so we had some experience with this," said Heather Graves, chief development officer at Marklund.

"Our residents and clients do have developmental disabilities, so our therapy team totally stepped up with residents who loved art," Graves added. "The students



Marklund student Amyia shows her joy in working on a painting with a recreational therapist at the Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva in preparation for an art display in downtown Chicago.



The "Flower Field" painting is one of six pieces of art that students and residents created at Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva for a display in the lobby of the Neiman Marcus building at 737 N. Michigan Ave. in Chicago.

and residents came up with a theme, and the therapists worked on personal therapy goals while figuring out how

to use different tools to make the art."

It was a quick turnaround, which meant Marklund's past experience with art projects came in handy.

"We had three or four weeks to get supplies, do the art, get it framed and get it to downtown Chicago," Graves noted. "It was during the holidays, so we had a lot going on and some staff off work. In coordinating and doing the logistics to make sure we could stay on target with the challenge, our therapy team stepped up and exceeded all expectations."

It helped quite a bit that one of those recreational therapists, Wes Kochan, working out of Geneva for Marklund since 1997, has had a side gig as an artist and musician for many years.

"With recreational therapy, myself and the others are good at getting these sorts of things done," Kochan said.

"It wasn't just a matter of

getting some paintings done. I knew where these were going and that it had to be good art," he added. "My background in doing art and music in the past helped."

It also sparked plenty of innovation in how the developmentally impaired residents and students could create such beautiful pieces of art. Each painting represented the work from eight to 10 Marklund residents or students.

The large canvases called for a different approach in terms of the thickness of paint, the types of brush strokes needed, and how the artists could reach certain parts of the painting based on their range of motion limitations.

"It's almost like giving them a longer arm, when you sometimes take a plastic hockey stick and tape on a paint brush at the end," Kochan

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said. "Everyone thought it was really cool and they could use it to reach out to paint the sky, back and forth, like an art pattern."

Kochan would choose a resident with a different motor pattern to do the more detailed work with smaller brushes and strokes. "I like a nice, simple approach," he noted. "We use things readily available and get good results."

Gunjan Patel, director of therapy at Marklund, found the creativity of therapists to be "amazing." She described one process as putting a small hole in the bottom of a bucket of paint and then having a resident hit the bucket to spin it around and spray a pattern on the canvas.

All of that creativity paid off with a project that left her knowing it all went well.

"The smiles on all of the residents' and students' and clients' faces in getting this project done was just so beautiful," Patel said.

But it had an even deeper meaning for Patel, who has worked at Marklund for 20 years, and others who have been there a long time. She realized the time frame for this effort was its own gift, but also in stark contrast to how therapists at Marklund approach their life's work.

"Sometimes we are afraid we will not be able to get a project done, but anything that shows a little progress — as therapists, we are happy," she said. "With the population we work with, it is not like outpatient therapy where, within four weeks, we will attain our

goals. This work can be years and years, so it's not immediate gratification.

"It can be frustrating," Patel added. "But we have to be patient with the population we serve."

It's a good reminder for all of us. We have to be patient for spring. But, oh, how much easier it is to wait when the "Awaiting Spring" display from Marklund students and residents brings such a pleasant jolt to all of us.

### A chance for Swift tickets

Although it's important to highlight Marklund's work with developmentally disabled kids and adults, it's worth noting the agency's Top Hat Ball fundraiser in Chicago on Saturday, Feb. 10, has a significant auction item.

Tickets to a Taylor Swift concert on Oct. 25 in New

Orleans, with hotel room and an autographed Swift album, will be up for bid at the event at the Chicago Marriott on Michigan Avenue.

Proxy bidding is available for those unable to attend. Information is available by emailing [jzupo@marklund.org](mailto:jzupo@marklund.org).