Downturn’s anxiety explored in Tri-C exhibit

By Faith Boone
fboone@sunnews.com

"The Art of Mental Health and Wellness" exhibit at the Tri-C Eastern Campus sent some attendees home with a better understanding of artists’ pain.

A free, public art exhibit, it debuted Feb. 16 at the CCC campus in Highland Hills. The exhibit is sponsored by Tri-C Creative Arts/Pre-art Therapy Department, the Ursuline College Art Therapy & Counseling Department and the Tri-Gallery East, with support from The Buckeye Art Therapy Association.

Mary Sender, art therapy coordinator at Tri-C, said the exhibit was created to show the rise of depression and anxiety among those affected by the economic downturn.

"A lot of people are experiencing a lot of depression and anxiety because of the economy and there are ways of expressing this anguish, or this type of feeling, through creative arts that helps without costing a considerable amount of money," Sender said. "It helps them express it and release some of the stress and anxiety and also helps them form a direction for goals in their life that perhaps they have never looked at before."

Opening Reception

This 12th annual exhibit featured artwork by nationally known artist Donna Drozd as well as local artists and others who use art to discover and maintain their own wellness.

"By doing this type of exhibit and allowing people to showcase their artwork and anguish, it shows the beauty in what they express and how far they have come to help them work through some of these anxieties, to actually start to grow a little and maybe change direction to come up with renewed ideas through their creative being," Sender said. "Many of us surpass that until something like this occurs. Our experiences of losing jobs or losing your self-esteem because of this—this helps increase self-esteem and outlook on life. There is a life out there and we don’t need a lot of money to experience life in general."

More than 300 people showed up to the opening reception. Some Tri-C students were allowed to create artwork and sell it at the exhibit—something Sender allowed to occur for the first time.

"We did that to help (the students) during this economy and I will do it again," she said. "It helps those students with limited income and it gives a special bonus to the community to see what the artists, of all ages, had to exhibit."

Keynote Speaker

At the event, Drozd gave the keynote lecture titled "Planting Seeds, Harvesting Health." During her lecture, Drozd talked about the three M’s of "Making Life the Master Peace." She said to "make marks" by experimenting with writing, drawing or scratching in the sand. "Move" your body by walking, dancing and expressing yourself. And, finally, "mind your manner" by observing the manner in which you speak to yourself and others.

When Drozd spoke with Sender and Pepper Pike Ursuline Graduate Professor Amy Jacobs, she explained how she connects wellness and creativity.

"My experience and education have taught me that wellness and creativity are inseparable," Drozd said. "After experiencing severe trauma through violence, I was intuitively guided to immerse myself in what is a lifelong dedication to the yoga of my creative work. I am instilled with curiosity about the capacity for self expression, utilizing the arts in all forms, as a potent and dynamic healing choice."

Drozd said she trusts that collective creative options will continue to change the world and bring benefit to the planet and all living beings.

More than just an exhibit

All of the money raised from the opening reception, including a percentage collected from the students who sold their artwork, will go to the schools with art therapy programs within Cuyahoga County.

Two concurrent workshops were held Feb. 17 with one titled "Making Life the Master Peace" presented by Drozd and another called "SoulCollage © Sort, Snip, Shape, Stick" presented by Bernadette McClain, a trained SoulCollage facilitator. Sender said 125 people attended the workshops and were eager to attend a part two.

Sender said attendees took away a sense of peace, joy and happiness after seeing the artwork.

“They felt, at the end, a sense of peace and someone said they went home and painted all night. We encourage them to look into their creative part and look differently at things. Another person said they couldn’t wait to get to the workshop because they wanted to continue the process," she said. "Art therapy is about the process—not the final project, but the period you go through. Some wanted to continue to release their anxiety and stress because they saw how the artists did it. They had a fun time and we got nothing but great comments."

The exhibit will be open to the public through March 8 in the Tri-C Gallery East, in the Education Center Building of the Eastern Campus, 4250 Richmond Road, Highland Hills. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday—Thursday.

For more information about the exhibit, call (216) 987-2473. See more news at cleveland.com/community

Contact Boone at (216) 985-5472

Tri-C Art Therapy Coordinator Mary Sender (from left), "The Art of Mental Health and Wellness" keynote speaker Donna Drozd, professor of the Ursuline Art Therapy program Amy Jacobs and Ursuline director of art therapy Gail Rule-Hoffman.

Pepper Pike resident Sister Kathleen Burke of Ursuline College shows off her artwork titled "St. Hildegard of Bingen: Healer and Patroness of Wholeness."