

Art Cart draws out inspiration

Bloomsburg youth service extends to Danville for work at senior centers



By JOSEPH STENDER
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DANVILLE — Created just over a year ago to better expose local youth to art, the Art Cart is now venturing to the opposite end of the age spectrum to sharpen memories.

As Marie Mueller recalled childhood memories of playing handball and jumping rope in the streets of her Brooklyn neighborhood, Flo Trefsaeger of Mount Carmel used markers to draw pictures of her mother's garden. The round, red tomatoes and blue speckles that represented a blueberry bush that sprawled across Trefsaeger's paper was just one of the pieces created with help by the Art Cart this week at the Nazareth Memory Center here.

The Art Cart, a service of The Exchange in Bloomsburg, is a program that looks to empower residents with the tools and confidence to show off their art skills, no matter how advanced or basic they may be.

As Oren Helbok, executive director of The Exchange, put it: "Everyone is an artist."

"It's not about art instruction — we're not teaching people to paint — but everyone has something in them," he observed.

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Flo Trefsaeger, Mount Carmel, above, laughs with **Oren Helbok**, who brought the Art Cart to the Nazareth Memory Center. The two were coming up with ideas of fruits and vegetables to draw during an art therapy session on Tuesday.

Ada Welker, Lavelle, at immediate right, laughs as she looks over her garden drawing.

Welker adds tomatoes to her garden drawing, at far right.

PHOTOS BY BILL HUGHES



Art 'Everyone has some art, some beauty, inside them'

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The Art Cart is just one year into its existence, originally created in the summer of 2015 to serve children attending youth programs. But as Helbok explained, it eventually began adding visits to senior facilities, like the Nazareth Memory Center on Schoodhouse Road. It serves those with Alzheimer's and dementia.

'Get what's inside ... out'

As Helbok recently worked with a small group at Nazareth, he started conversations with each resident to begin the artistic process. He asked them about their favorite summer activity, or a memory they have from childhood. That's what led Mueller to her days in Brooklyn, telling Helbok about visiting the beach and riding the trolley for a nickel.

Sometimes, Helbok said memories can be evoked by a phrase or question. He encourages these conversations because triggering those memories allows the individual to remember who they were and to express themselves.

"It's a way of trying to get what's inside people, out," Helbok said.

"Everyone has some art, some beauty, inside them."

The two populations The Exchange primarily serves with the Art Cart — seniors and youth — require much different approaches. While Helbok brought simple materials, such as markers and



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MARIE MUELLER, left, Brooklyn, N.Y., talks with Nazareth Memory Center activities director **Patty Dunn** as Marie joins the art therapy session on Tuesday.

paper, for the memory center, student participants have created displays using recycled plastic bottles and compact discs.

During the past three months, Helbok reported the Art Cart was

used at 53 events in 10 different locations.

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