



Studio 84: Art @ Work



The brain child of founders and directors, Deborah Blackwell and Katherine Fincutter, Studio 84 opened its doors on July 1, 2009. Since then over 700 students and visitors have visited the studio and gallery. "It's wonderful", states Blackwell, "to see so many people come through our doors and amazing to see people of all ages and abilities working side by side on their art and in the theater programs."



Studio 84, located at 121 West Center Street in downtown Whitewater, is a non profit community art studio. It is a unique space offering exhibits and workshops in the arts for people of all ages and all abilities. The staff at Studio 84 specializes in working with people with disabilities and believes in inclusion when ever possible.



Studio 84's newest program, Art @ Work, is taking shape. The program is designed to assist the artist with disabilities in developing their artistic talents. It teaches and encourages the skills needed in art making, displaying their work, submitting to galleries, and selling their work. Most of all it develops self worth, pride, confidence and acceptance.

Currently there are 4 artists involved in the program. They each are residents at Inspiration Ministries, a residential community for adults with disabilities in Walworth, Wisconsin. For their first project they worked on a collaborative piece. This painting, which consists of four small panels, depicts the four seasons. The piece will be auctioned off at Inspiration Ministries' annual Sharing the Harvest Dinner/Auction, held this year on November 12 at the Geneva National Golf Club. The Sharing the Harvest Dinner/Auction is an upscale event that features excellent food, a great program, and wonderful live and silent auctions. For more about the auction visit www.inspirationministries.org. Auction proceeds go to the Bread of Life Fund, which is a financial bridge between residents' resources and the cost of their care, making it possible for them to continue to live at Inspiration Ministries.

One of the goals of the Art @ Work program for IM residents is to develop and contribute to a transportation fund that all residents can use to get out into the community for cultural events. For those with disabilities, transportation is often a physically and financially burdensome part of their life. All too often they are isolated at home due to transportation costs.

The concept of artists with disabilities working is not a new one. There are several excellent programs such as the Donna Lexa Art Center in Waukesha, ArtWorking in Madison and Project Onward in Chicago. Studio 84 is in the process of working with Lakeland School and VIP Industries in developing an Art @ Work program specific to their needs. Often when students graduate from school, the creative ones get lost in the system; unable to use and explore their creative voice. The Art @ Work Program fills that void.



Betsy Russ, a long time artist, has put her "creative needs to the wayside for too many years" she said, until she discovered Studio 84. She is excited to have a place to do her art, to have the mentorship she needs, the guidance and challenges that she craves. She's looking forward to be able to exhibit her work in a gallery.



Jane Dewey, another Art @ Work participant, is new to the creative process. Helife has not been easy following an accident that put her into a world of self doubt of her abilities. Jane has remarked often that at Studio 84 she feels there is hope and that she looks forward to coming here. Here she has the opportunity to express herself in a new way, learn new skills, and increase her self confidence.

For more information stop by; hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10 am to 5 pm. Or visit our website at www.studio84inc.org. ❖