



JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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Release At Will

CMA Helps Students Hone Creativity

STEUBENVILLE-Students at the School of Bright Promise get to show their creative side through a partnership with the Center of Music and Art.

Twice a month, CMA instructors Gerald Van Scyoc and Aimee Carroll spend time giving art and music lessons to developmentally disabled students. Van Scyoc is on hand twice a month for hour-long sessions while Carroll visits twice a week for 1 ½-hour classes. Both say they enjoy the opportunity and it also helps the students grow.

Van Scyoc, who usually teaches an average of 15 students, recently had more than 20 pupils in a colorful mood by using watercolors to paint autumn leaves. He added an extra twist by also allowing them to freely dabble on paper towels. Students ages 10-21 showcased their artistic prowess with leaves in hues of green, yellow, red, and even blue, while the towels combined various colors and designs of their choosing. Van Scyoc said he tries to keep the students interested and they have fun in the process.

“They all have a good time,” he said. “I like it when they are interested in it.”

Van Scyoc has taught the classes for the past two years and said students enjoy the challenge of painting much more than simply coloring with crayons. One fun project involved using paint-filled squirt guns on a large sheet of paper that hung on a wall, and the prospective Jackson Pollocks shot an array of colors onto the makeshift canvas for their amusing assignment. Their creations are regularly displayed at the school to view and revere.

Tara Zascavage, an aide at the school, marveled over the student’s ability to express themselves.

“I think it lets them do what they want to see what’s actually in their mind,” she commented. “I think they enjoy it a lot.”

Carroll, who works with 10-15 students on Wednesdays and 30-40 on Thursdays, prepares them by using everything from colors to hand movements. Students play instruments, such as tambourines and drums, use scarves and do movement, and even sing. Carroll said the groups also perform twice a year.

“This is my third year,” Carroll said. “I try to get them to understand rhythm and the beginning foundation of music. We’re doing it based on colors and pitches. I try to find things that interest them. Every year they do two shows at Christmas and in the spring, and then we have a graduation.”

The School of Bright Promise has been involved with CMA for more than seven years and officials said Van Scyoc and Carroll do a phenomenal job of working with the students.

“Both programs bring out the creativity in our students and show they can do more than what you think,” said Principal Rachel Bodo. “The art and music teachers are very talented and come up with unique ways to make the students learn.”

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(Photo Cutline: Gerald Van Scyoc, an art instructor at the Center of Music and Art in Wintersville, works with a student at the School of Bright Promise during a watercolors session at the school. The Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities has partnered with the CMA for more than seven years and officials said the program has helped bring out the students’ creativity.)

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