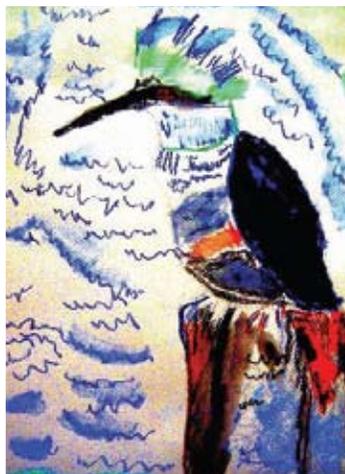
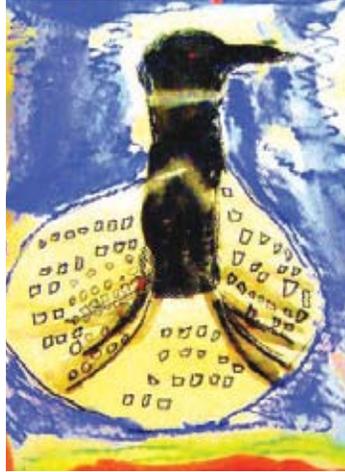
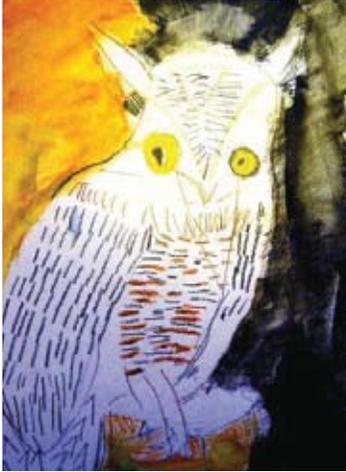


ANNUAL ARTS ISSUE

BREAKING GROUND

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A PUBLICATION OF THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PARTHENON



Top Row: **Mockingbird**, by Lisa Manus; **Red-Eyed Vireo**, by Lisa Manus; **Tennessee Thrush**, by Patricia Brawner
 Middle Row: **Yellow-Billed Cuckoo**, by Ricky Kirouac; **Black Vulture**, by Randy Bonham; **Raven**, by Renee Roberts
 Bottom Row: **Sand Hill Crane**, by Mike Rewis; **American Kestrel**, by Joanna McAtee; **I am an Ibis**, by Vickie Rollins

ON THE COVER

Top Row: **Great Horned Owl**, by Scott Gipson; **Osprey, sometimes called a Fish Hawk**, by Scott Gipson; **I am a common Loon**, by Mike Rewis; **Hoopoe Bird**, by Paul Miktarian
 Middle Row: **Bald Eagle**, by Susan Jasper; **Wood Duck**, by Mike Rewis; **American Robin**, by Lisa Maxwell; **Tennessee Crane**, by Scott Gipson;
 Bottom Row: **Carolina Wren**, by Tracey Martin; **Raven**, by Lisa Maxwell; **Belted Kingfisher**, by Mike Rewis; **Tufted Titmouse**, by Lisa Manus

The artists on the cover and page 2 created these paintings for a book, *Birds of Tennessee Plus One, the Alphabet Book*, published at Pacesetters in Algood.

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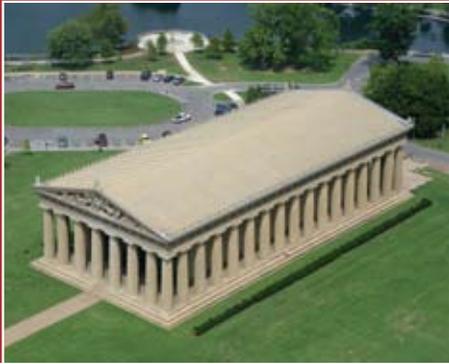
CONTACT INFORMATION



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EXPERIENCING ART THROUGH TOUCH

By DeeGee Lester

Consider for a moment the art museum experience from the perspective of a visitor who is blind.

When they can't see it; when they can't touch it; when those who can see it describe it randomly, recklessly, assuming they "get it", is it any wonder that museums in general, and art museums in particular, leave many visitors who are blind frustrated and unmoved?

Each year, people travel to Nashville from across the nation and around the world to visit the only full-scale replica of the ancient Parthenon. Originally constructed in 1897 for the Tennessee Centennial Exposition, Nashville's Parthenon was restored as a permanent structure in 1931. The building's perfect balance and symmetry, the optical illusion of vertical and horizontal lines, the breathtaking beauty of sculptured figures emerging from the pediments or encircling the architrave, the carefully crafted details rising upwards to 65 feet add to the building's beauty and wonder. Inside, visitors stand in awe before the 42-foot gilded statue of Athena, sculpted by Alan LeQuire, or ramble through downstairs galleries, admiring contemporary works of art or paintings by American masters such as Winslow Homer, Frederic Church, Sanford Gifford and Elihu Vedder.

Providing accessibility, creative interpretation and programming for visitors who are blind or visually impaired has been a priority for the Parthenon staff for a dozen years. In 1998, an impromptu tour for one child who was blind, whose reluctance to enter the museum was reflected in his comment, "Oh, Mama, there won't be anything for me in there", sparked the push for inclusion and active participation by this special audience. The production of Braille brochures by the Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB) and the creation of Braille signage for the Elgin Marble casts by a Vanderbilt graduate student offered some interpretive assistance. However, the small percentage of Braille readers within the blind population awakened the need to provide additional services.

Special tours of the building were created that focused on the architecture and included taking visitors who are blind into the Parthenon's tunnels, an area off-limits to the general public and referred

to by students from the Tennessee School for the Blind as "going to the dungeon". Students were given the opportunity to "see through touch" the original 1897 walls and the textured fragments of building details such as the Greek key, as well as molds used by sculptors Belle Kenney Scholtz and Leopold Scholtz while constructing the pediments.

The Parthenon is fortunate in its efforts to work with people who are sight-impaired in that the building itself is a work of art that can be explored through touch. From the 24-foot, seven-and-a-half-ton doors, to the columns and exterior steps, to the architectural fragments in the Museum collection, visitors who are blind are able to grasp much of the beauty and magnitude of this amazing building. For so many museums, exterior exploration is not an option at all or is one of very limited scope.

The tours assisted people with visual impairments in knowing many of the details of the building. However, they had no context and no way of knowing the location of the various details within the architectural framework. The challenge for the Parthenon staff: how to pull significant details soaring 45-65 feet overhead to ground level.

The answer came as a portion of a grant from the Ida F. Cooney Fund for the Arts through the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. Local wood craftsman Richard Waters and Athena sculptor Alan LeQuire combined their talents to build a wooden model of the entablature—the exterior upper portion of the classical order, including the architrave, frieze and cornice, as well as details of the roof. Local businesses, including Summers Lumber & Timber Company, Nashville Plywood, Inc., as well as Nashvillians Joe and Vicki Amann, provided generous donations of materials for the model. The entablature was unveiled at a special opening on April 30, 2010. Approximately 75 guests attended, including many individuals who were blind and sight-impaired, as well as representatives from the Tennessee School for the Blind and other organizations that work with people who are blind. The entablature model is one way the Parthenon meets the ongoing challenge of creating programs to engage those with impaired vision and helps them understand this unique structure.

The art galleries present distinct interpretive issues. Over the past 12

years, a number of programs have been created to bring the pleasure of the gallery experience to people who are blind. During the Winslow Homer exhibit in 2000, young actors from Nashville Children's Theatre were brought in to re-enact four famous Homer paintings as living art for exploration by TSB students.

This experience showed the thrill of multi-sensory art exploration through story-telling, re-enactment and tactile elements, as well as bringing in elements of sound and smell to the interpretation of art.

Within the galleries, visitors had access to interpretation for one painting within the museum's permanent James Cowan Collection. The simple layout and rich textural elements of *The New Dress* by Edwin Blashfield provided an opportunity for visitors to explore, through touch, samples matching the painting's details, including satin and lace from the dress, the pearl necklace, the carved fan and other items shown in the scene.

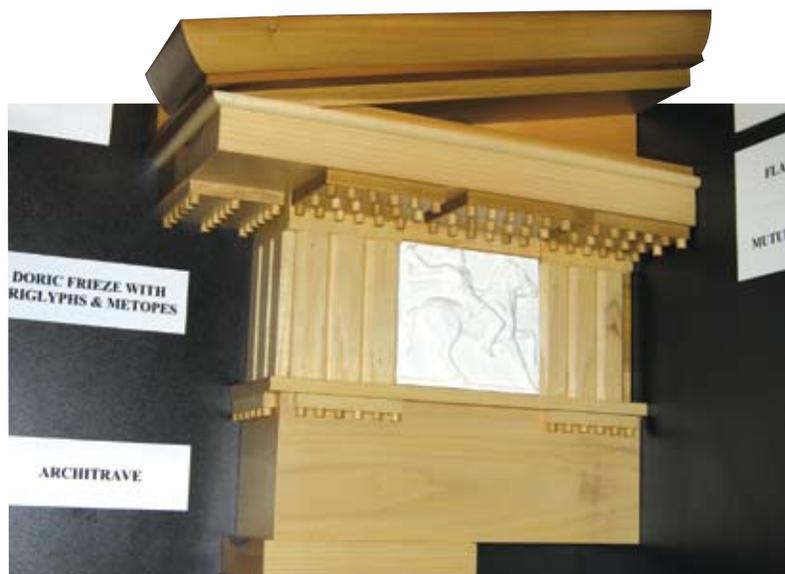
As part of the same grant that funded the entablature model, the Cooney Fund provided the opportunity to expand interpretation of the galleries through a funded internship for TSB graduate Susan Gwinn, who helped create a special tour of the Cowan Collection. Using various sensory tools, including audio effects, representative fabrics and objects from the paintings, music and literature, an interpretive program for 10 works of art within the collection was designed. In complementary groups of two, the tour presents works by many of America's greatest artists, including Blashfield, Elihu Vedder, Emil Carlsen, George Elmer Brown, Elliott Daingerfield, Paul Dougherty, William Merritt Chase, Edward Dufner, Charles Courtney Curran, Carl Frederick Frieseke and Hovsep Pushman.

Presented at the April 30th opening, the tour opens access to these magnificent works of art to a new and enthusiastic audience. As stories behind the paintings are told, simple layouts are revealed, textures are explored and sounds emerge. The essence of the paintings unfolds and visitors are able to experience each work of art. For example, at Pushman's *Rose of Shiraz*, visitors are introduced to the sadness of a bride entering a loveless marriage, touch the delicate lace of a bridal veil and jewels, and, as they listen to the sad music of lost love, are invited to reflect, with their own facial expressions, the sadness in her eyes that creates the mood of the painting.

As each new interpretive effort is made and each program developed, the Parthenon staff stretches to find other ways to provide access and to serve our guests.

As our reputation continues to spread among people who are blind and visually impaired, the impact of these programs can be tremendous. It has long been our goal to be the most accessible museum in America and each grant received, each program initiated, enables the Parthenon to move closer to that ultimate goal.

DeeGee Lester has been the education director at the Parthenon since 1997.



Entablature model by wood craftsman Richard Waters and Athena sculptor Alan LeQuire



Winslow Homer, *Snap the Whip*



Nashville Children's Theatre student re-enactment of *Snap the Whip* for TSB students.



Untitled, Taylor Reece

Taylor J. Reece is a rising senior at Cleveland High School and a member of the Blue Raiders Marching Band. He also enjoys spending time with his family and going on "photo safaris" with them.



Untitled, Taylor Reece

SOCIAL POLICY

David S. Pointer

My poem aims only to
win the wrist wrestling
championships against
the unequal arm scales
of elite economics to go
turbo over the top as
an inclusive team taking
the fists and unfair kicks
out of all social policies
wrapped around our lives
like red velvet ring ropes.

David S. Pointer lives and writes in Murfreesboro. Mr. Pointer has two poetry chapbooks coming out at Thunderclap Press and New Polish Beat.

I SEE MYSELF DANCING

By Pam VanGilder

Photo by Pam VanGilder



This program was sponsored by Very Special Arts of Tennessee and the Tennessee Arts Council.

Madonna Learning Center (MLC), a school for children with disabilities ages five through adult, teaches its students the

skills and abilities needed to function and live rich and fulfilling lives. This includes providing opportunities for the development of creativity and self-expression through the arts. Weekly dance classes focus on strength, flexibility, coordination and learning choreography, as well as movement exploration experiences that guide them in the creation of their own dances. These personal dances are their signatures, offering us dynamic pictures of their feelings and preferences.

However, a dance is done in a moment of time; when it comes to an end, it lives only in the memory of the viewer. We were able to capture a glimpse of the movement signatures of students at MLC through a visual art project that was created three years ago. The goal of the project was to guide the students through the creative process by addressing the skills, the materials and the choices a visual artist makes when creating a work of art, and for each of the students to create a work of art that represented themselves in a meaningful way. The final product was to be a self-portrait.

Their self-portraits were created from a photograph taken of each student. They were asked to wear their favorite outfit, something that they felt good wearing, something that told us about them. One girl loved the movie *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and wore a t-shirt and a hat from the movie. Another girl wore her level green Taekwondo belt with a green sweater. Others wore a favorite shirt, boots, belt, skirt, dress or other articles that made a personal statement. Then, in their dance class, they were asked to improvise dances to music by moving in their own way, creating shapes of different levels, swirling, floating or vibrating through the dance space. Photos were taken of them as they danced and from these photos they selected the one they felt was their best representation.

There were many steps and stages of learning and exploration leading to the final products. First, the students learned about the color wheel

and experimented with mixing primary colors to create various shades of secondary colors. They learned how to choose brushes of different sizes to create various strokes. They experimented with applying paint to large pieces of paper, creating images of their choice. Some were beautiful abstract paintings of color and form; others were representations of personal experiences and people who were important to the students.

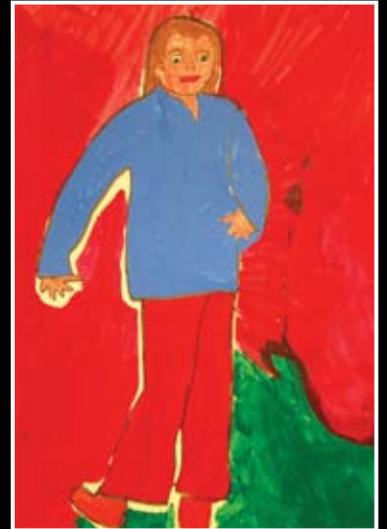
When it was time to paint their self-portraits, the students were familiar with the materials, had ideas in mind and were eager to get started. The photographs were projected onto a large canvas and, with guidance, they traced their outline. Then they began to paint their portraits, starting with the background and working into the details of their clothing, their hair and their facial expressions. The focused energy and the intensity of their work were captivating. The students immediately made personal choices about color as they mixed the paint, selecting brushes and other tools for application. Anne Froning Wike, the visual artist who designed and implemented the project, the teachers, assistants and therapists followed the students' lead, asking questions to help them clarify their choices and offered them gentle suggestions to guide them to their desired effects.

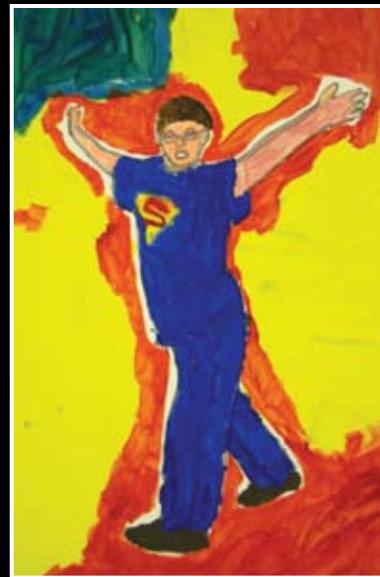
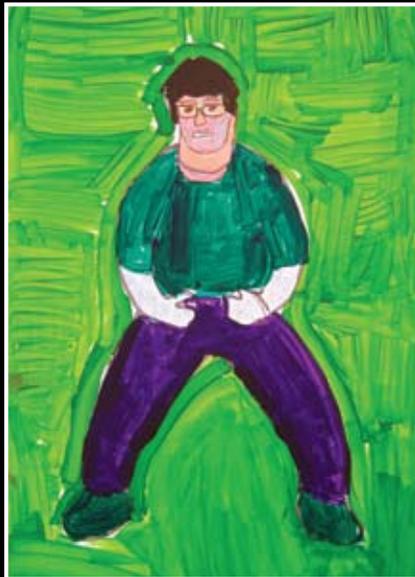
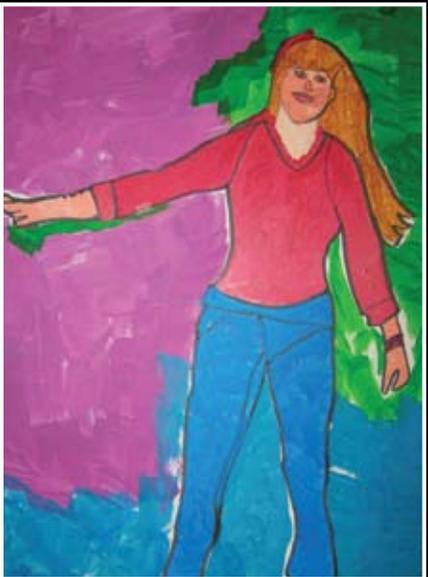
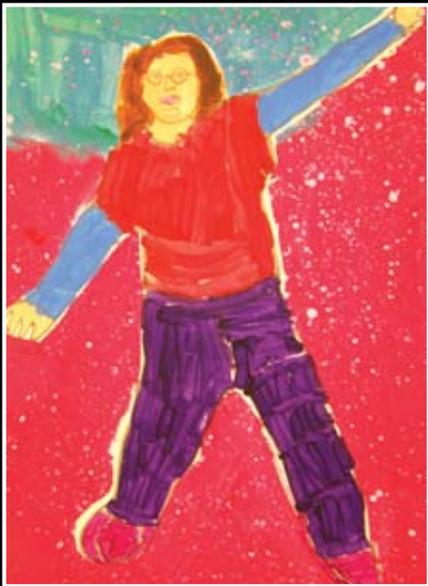
One student chose colors for his background that represented the ribbons he had won in Special Olympics; another decided to add splatter paint to his background. The brush strokes, colors, splatters and dabs of paint depicted the energy of their dance. Importance was given to the details of their chosen attire: a Superman emblem, a button, shades of color, shoe style. One student had posed as the Hulk in his photo, adding facial color to enhance his character. Each portrait was an incredible personal representation, the embodiment of the spirit of each person.

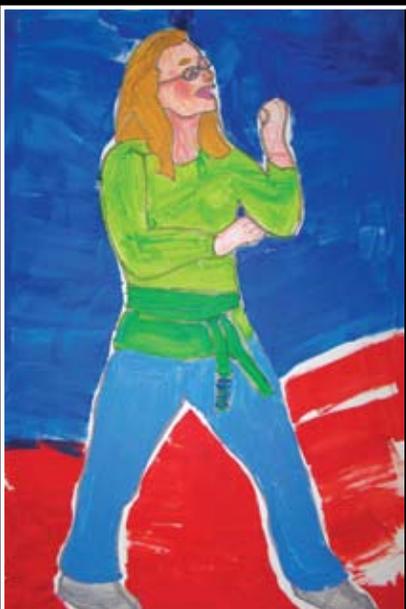
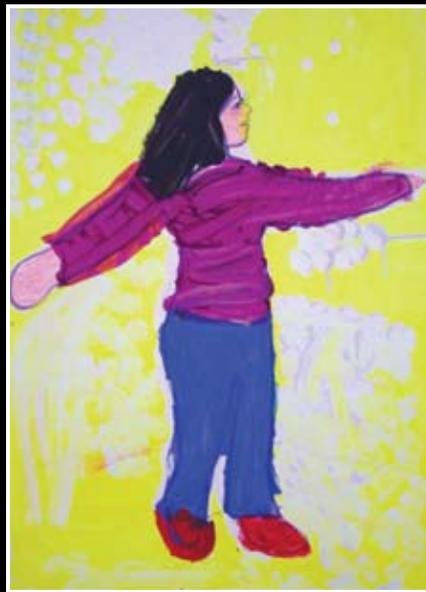
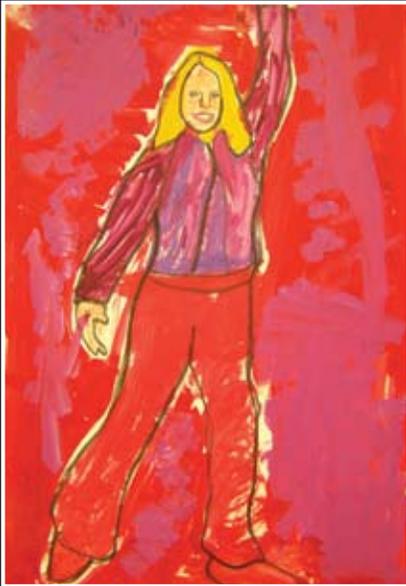
Regardless of any intellectual or physical disabilities, our students have thoughts, ideas and dreams they want to express and be noticed. Through their art, they can express themselves in ways that are not possible in words. We can see their ideas in their paintings, feel their thoughts in their dances, empathize with their feelings in their dramatic plays. By working through the artistic process, they learn to make observations about the world, they learn to use the tools of an artist, and they discover how to use these tools to share their views of reality with the rest of us.

Pam VanGilder is the movement specialist and director of the after-school arts programs at Madonna Learning Center in Germantown.

Opposite Page: Top Row - Artists Left to Right: Drew Durr, Amy Burgus, Rachael Krug; Middle Row - Artists Left to Right: Daniel Wray, Caroline Williams, Brittany Haase; Bottom Row - Artists Left to Right: Tim McNatt, Warren Curtis, Shelby Stewart







Top Row - Artists Left to Right: Hatley Glenn, Kelly Depperschmidt, Rachel Donaldson
Bottom Row - Artists Left to Right: Sarah VanGilder, Kyle Krebs

Opposite Page:

Top Row - Artists Left to Right: Linsey Strawn, Lea Thomas, Jessica Jones

Middle Row - Artists Left to Right: Wesley Baucum, Patrick Pruitt, Elisabeth Ann Neel

Bottom Row - Artists Left to Right: Kourtney Krebs, Matthew Abis, Samuel Kohler



Train, Sam Moses

Sam Moses is 19 years old and was born and raised in Sweetwater. Mr. Moses uses pastels and markers to create his drawings. He was diagnosed with autism when he was five years old.

NICHOLAS AND THE GHOST

By Nicholas Gross

Nicholas is a 2-10-0 engine, who is strong and powerful. He and his brother train, Sean, are mixed traffic engines for the night shift. They help Henry out on the Flying Kipper Run. One night Nicholas was taking the overnight goods train to Lackalumba Bay. His driver, Eddy, looked into the sky. "Whenever there's a full moon, there is a ghost that keeps its territory protected at Lumper Hill."

"Thanks for the warning," said Nicholas, as he departed from Luthred Yard. Nicholas chugged alone into the foggy night.

"If this keeps up, we'll be going off the mainline." said Nicholas' driver.

Just then, a swoosh of steam was heard.

"What was that?"

Then there was the sound of a lonesome low whistle off in the distance.

"Gh-gh-gh-ghost train!" cried Nicholas. His crew became spooked.

"Let's get out of here, Nicholas!" With that Nicholas sped away backwards.

The next day, Sean and his friend Katey, the crocodile engine, were stunned about Nicholas' ghost train.

"Well, that was spooky there, Big Nicholas. I'm sure that there's a mystery there on that hill, my friend. My electric line is nearby. Perhaps we can search for this ghost engine tonight. Besides, I've got the overnight freight, too. You know, I'll join your trip on Lumper Hill," suggested Katey.

Nicholas smiled big. Nicholas and Katey were ready to climb Lumper Hill. They headed out to the ascent to Lumper Hill. When they reached the top of the hill, there was trouble. Their two heavy loads pushed Katey and Nicholas down the hill faster and faster. A mysterious shape appeared in front of Nicholas, connected to his cowcatcher and helped slow Nicholas down. They managed to stop at the bottom of the hill. They were smoking hard. "Well, bless our tracks! That was close!"

There out in the open in front of Nicholas was a young engine.

"Here's your ghost, Nicholas. His name is Bumbler. You'll like him, he's silly."

Nicholas smiled.

At Lackalumba Bay, Nicholas told the president and the dispatcher about his mysterious ghost and how the young Bumbler saved his train.

"You were afraid first, but Katey joined you and you solved the mystery. You are all very useful engines."

Nicholas and Katey smiled. They knew that finding their new friend and solving the mystery are very fun, especially on Halloween.

Nicholas Gross was diagnosed with autism when he was two-and-a-half years old. Mr. Gross lives in Gallatin and is passionate about restoration of historical steam engines.

WILL WRITE POEMS FOR FOOD

by *N. Scott Reynolds*

I will walk me to the morose coroner
Pass him the funereal pittance plate,
Though I am disabled, girls still eye me up begging for a date,
So I say meet me at the Bean Central
Coffeehouse Dutch treat in 4 hours

Meanwhile back at the corner of 20th & West End
Sharing the corner with some of the more
Savvy of mind & cognition, and otherwise
With the rich "bums" who work for food
To the tune of \$200 a day
JADP¹, I've been told Wall Street panhandlers
Have six-digit incomes
"Yes, but you need to know the market."

I guess if money is so important to me
I should move to Wall Street this ego-bruising moment
But since, IRL² FUD³ and since to me, money is the dreadful mammon
What every one who is in need works for all week
Including our Christian brothers who in repentance
Pay out the nose in Sunday's communion plate
You think time itself is established just for the purpose
Of subjugating humans and beasts
The brothers pound their chests and pray like biblical publicans
As their extra special gift for the wife
Gets pushed back one more week one more month
On into infinity

People don't get it, they ask, how can I
Dwindle & twiddle away my creativity
For coffee or mere food I tell them
People throw money for that or any
Kind of poem Besides, I scribble
The same poem for everyone: look
I keep copies

A woman drives up to the corner
Looking suspiciously like Anne Sexton
She's in an old Ford Galaxy
Station wagon full of dents and crusty glass window cubes
Scattered like sheep in the rear deck and the rear seat
Making me dream of fixing my teeth
The car looked like someone took too unkindly
To the bastion of capitalism's
Swarthy automobile a, may I say, a
Maxwell's silver hammer for sheer manic laughs

The woman, evidently for her laughs, shouts out the window:
'Hey Mister! What sort of poems do you write?'
Which riven with a thick Southern drawl,
The thunder of the car's exhaust,

And the tinny din of the tailpipe rattling like a dog in rut
Against the car's chassis and the surrounding traffic
It sounded as if she yelled
'What sordid pomes dew yah riot?'

So I yell at her above the rent-a-wreck's Jupiterian
Ka Boom my lips sticking together because of the medication
Like taffy sticks to most everything
And attempt to spit out the lip-ripping counsel
The shorter the better
'Lyrics if possible
Though usually narrative confessionals
With some admixture of purple prosody for
Good effect and measure'

The light turns green
She takes off her car roars like a Saturn 5 rocket
Ascending the intersection without her car
Scraping the bumpers on the off-camber asphalt
The worn out shock absorbers give off their excuses
And the scraping bumpers could be the
Flint of some long lost world gone haywire
Billows of blue smoke cloud &
Worm their way heavenward
Like a strange fragrant capitalist incense
Of the sort we know is damnable.
I cough returning to the sweaty chore
Of hanging my shingle notary public
Uselessly attempting to dissuade
The perspiring under odor of my armpits
From curdling possible customers array
For the nice people whom some of the other guys label 'suckers'

'Will write poems for food'

Carloads of literature students drive by yelling
'Hey Bartleby, go get a job, buckle down
Scrivener!'
Some yell 'prepare to meet your destiny
Surely your day has come,' others,
Perplexed:
'Are you using this money to buy booze?'

N. Scott Reynolds is from Nashville and has a schizo-affective disorder. Mr. Reynolds is working toward a Master's degree in Literature and is poetry editor with The Raven Ink.

¹ JADP=just a data point

² IRL=in real life

³ FUD=fear, uncertainty and despair



FROM SPARE PARTS TO MODEL CARS

By Cathy Galtieri

Have you ever dreamed of owning a Mercedes or a Jaguar? For most of us, those dreams remain just those...dreams. For one man, however, those dreams are a reality. He does not just own a Jaguar, he is building a Jaguar. Meet Brent Redmond of Knoxville, a creative thinker, builder and artist. Mr. Redmond's hobby is building model cars, but not just your regular model car from a kit that you buy in a store. No, Mr. Redmond's hobby is much more amazing than that.

Mr. Redmond began identifying cars by their make and model at the age of seven. He has been creating and building things since he was 10 years old. Mr. Redmond's mother once bought him a model car in a box, but he turned it into a robot instead. His mother also discovered that small appliances were not "safe" in their home. Clocks, radios, toasters, CD players, printers, etc. have all been dismantled and used to make moving parts for Mr. Redmond's creations. He once used an outdoor awning frame for one of his car frames. Mr. Redmond maintains it was an awning they were no longer using, his mother, however, is not so sure!

Mr. Redmond starts the process by choosing which car he wants to create. He may draw his own plans, stop at car dealerships for brochures/books, use the Internet for pictures of cars, or watch a favorite program on TV called "Top Gear". Once the type/model of car is selected, Mr. Redmond determines what kind of materials he will need. These may

include metal, aluminum, steel and plastic, in addition to nuts, bolts, screws, etc. Mr. Redmond has a vast supply of materials at home but still regularly scours the local area for what he needs. He has friends in some of the local hobby and home improvement stores in Knoxville with whom he can spend hours talking about what parts he needs.

The cars that Mr. Redmond builds are often about three feet long and are outfitted with doors, hoods and trunks that open and close. They also may have moving windows, a moving sunroof, a stereo that works, windshield wipers that move, driver and passenger seats that move, a gas tank that opens, and so much more. Mr. Redmond is always thinking about what to do next and how to make something better. Sometimes he gets so involved in what he is creating that he needs reminders to stop and eat.

Mr. Redmond's work area is currently the garage of the home he shares with his parents. The tools of the trade include all kinds of saws (table and hand), drills (table and hand), vises, lathes, Dremel, soldering iron, and small tools like screw drivers, pliers, wrenches, etc. Mr. Redmond taught himself how to use all of these tools and also learned a lot from the wood shop program when he was in school. It may take up to six months to complete a car, though Mr. Redmond is always thinking about his next creation. Unfortunately, if you don't see his masterpieces within 24 hours of their completion, you are bound to miss out. Mr. Redmond promptly dismantles his work after it is completed.

Recently, Mr. Redmond's neighbor walked by his house and saw him working in the garage. He stopped to see what Mr. Redmond was doing. The only word that he could utter when he saw what was in front of him was, "AWESOME." That one word says it all!!

Cathy Galtieri is a case manager with the Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services. She has worked with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for 19 years, both in New York and Tennessee.





Robert Wells, Jon Kent

Jon Kent is the president of Kent Creative, Inc. in Nashville.



Portrait of the Artist, Chris Patula

Chris Petulla is 16 years old, attends the Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences, and happens to have Down syndrome.



My Granin, Jayln Weston

Jayln Weston is on the autism spectrum and is seven years old. He lives in Sweetwater.

LOVE IS LIKE A TREE

By Terry Howard

When love starts out it's small and weak and takes a lot of nurturing to grow. It takes warm sunshine and lots of air and lots of room to grow. And as it grows it has the power to branch out and touch the lives of everyone it comes in contact with. Like wood on a tree, love can be very soft or very strong, a smooth touch or a coarse feeling, cold to the touch. But it's best when it's sweet like wine kisses and warm sunshine hugs. Love can save one's soul and help your heart along the way, love can enrich your life. And the lack of it can destroy the mightiest of the trees, like a hurricane love can sweep you off your feet, but it's best when it's nice and sweet; a welcomed retreat from harm. It is the strong embrace of your lover's arms, warm hugs that indeed is what everyone needs to feel secure, because home is where the heart is! We all need a home, so let love grow.

Terry Lee Howard is a survivor of a traumatic brain injury and lives in Nashville. Mr. Howard's motto includes the words "...always think positive thoughts to bring better dreams alive...".

In the Year of Sarah Palin: A TRIBUTE TO HOCKEY

By Dena Gassner



Several years ago a young man with a disability was media fodder for his brief touch with stardom achieved by hitting several three-point shots for his high school team.

The moment was tarnished for me because I am a cynic. All I could think was, “Why wasn’t he on the team for real?”

Others thought it was so great. I felt like Scrooge. I could not overlook the fact that this kid had donated four years of his life to this team, hauling water bottles, dealing with stinky uniforms and doing the beck and call of his entire team all the while spending his nights shooting free throws on his garage door hoop. But he wasn’t good enough for the team. The fact that his father was the coach made it even more disappointing for me. He should have been “out there”, a full team member. Not relegated to “water boy”.

Imagine then, one chilly night at home, my son Patrick in his room watching TV. Some unfamiliar noise was coming from the room. Usually I hear Patrick’s “play by play” practice monologue where he talks about the movie like he is in dress rehearsal for that moment when someone, anyone, would call him to go out. Instead it sounds like.... sports. Sports? My son, the Pokemon king, watching sports? My son, who, when asked, can tell you how many minutes, the producer and the director of every one of his nearly 300 movies? My son, whom no one in their right mind would compete with in movie trivia, is in his room and I hear... sports?

I knock gently and then open the door to see him watching a strange, gladiator-like event with men dressed in pads and carrying big sticks. Wait; I know this... it’s HOCKEY. Shocked, I ask,

“Hey, what are you watching?”

“Hockey”. Ask a stupid question...

“I didn’t know you liked hockey.”

“My teacher, Mr. Green, likes the Predators. It’s cool.”

About two months later, my son comes home from school and says they are looking for a manager for the high school team.

“You want to do what?”

“I want to see if they will let me be the manager of the hockey team.”

Ugh, my son relegated to “water boy”. How humiliating. How

degrading. Weren’t there so many other more important things we needed to work on? What about tutoring, and therapeutic horseback riding and social skills?

Sighing, with all my “self-advocacy” blood boiling, I sent the email to the team mom. She says, she’s not sure it’s a fit. She’s worried about the fact that it’s very smelly and, well, this is hockey—there’s a ton of cursing.

I notify her that those issues are ok for us. Patrick lost his sense of smell during seizure days (thank God for that... it is the smelliest sport known to man since the uniforms are never really clean after game one). And I am a pretty “out there” mom. Cursing is part of the social world. In fact, Patrick’s need to point out cursing had been such an issue for him that we started giving him curse words for his birthday. (By this call, he had “earned” two of his own.)

Ms. Cynical wasn’t totally happy but if Patrick wanted it, I was going to stack the deck in his favor. I made arrangements to meet Coach at the Mall. Patrick does better talking when he doesn’t have to make eye contact and he can move so it would be a walking interview. I attempted (in vain) some social prompting too. Despite all my reminding and discouraging, Coach later reported that they had had a quite intense, lengthy dialogue about hockey strategy—about the Double D from the movie “The Mighty Ducks”. The coach laughed. In a good way.

I asked that huge teddy bear of a man what he thought about this hockey thing and he said,

“We’re good to go.”

Those four words changed my son’s life forever.

When he was introduced to the team I got to hear another coach say,

“So Patrick’s one of us now. He’s a brother. And if anyone gives him crap, we’ve got his back. Here on the ice, at school or anywhere else.”

A bone shattering “Right COACH!” came from the team.

That’s all it took. Patrick was a hockey player in all the ways that counted.

From his team he’s learned “guy” stuff. Young men with special needs spend their lives surrounded by kind and generous women but they need to learn to be men. His “hockey brothers” taught him about

team sort of teasing, girls, dating and real cursing... (he wants the "F" word for his 21st birthday). He walks differently. He is confident. He never missed another school dance because his brothers would be there to "hang out" with him.

If that's not good enough, the team won the championship his first year. When he hoisted the championship cup over his head, the crowd roared his name. And I cried. In the year of Sarah Palin, I was crying at hockey. For the first time in his life, Patrick was experiencing what it is to be part of something more than a single-natured existence. Ms. Cynical died a cold but happy death that night.

No one could match the character and strength he has learned from the men known as Cougar coaches. Five men taught Patrick about honor. Courage. Respect. Persistence.

As I travel the nation teaching about autism, it's "The Hockey Stories" that leave them wanting more. At every single venue—EVERY ONE—parents cry wishing they too could have what we have had. They cry sharing our experience and in knowing that at least one kiddo was not alone, was not apart. Not a day goes by when I don't thank God for what we have experienced.

Humbly, I too admit to a different form of "inclusion". People don't realize that when the kids are excluded, so too are the parents. I had never been a team parent. In unflattering hockey jersey, I sat for hours on popsicle cold, icy bleachers (constant runny nose) in my plastic Cougar earrings until they wore out. I sobbed on senior night when he grabbed my hand and held it high. It was sheer joy.

Patrick feels the void where hockey used to be. But when it gets dark, and life gets hard, he will dig down deep and reconnect with these life lessons. My son walks taller, is stronger and is more complete from these years. He is ready to face life in a way he would not have been without his years as the "Hydration Consultant".

Making the graduation DVD I found that most of the video we were saving from the editing floor was almost all hockey stuff. Things like Patrick giving motivational speeches (the kid who doesn't talk in front of groups), the coaches talking about what Patrick had given them, his friends talking about the kind of friend Patrick was to them. There it was on film—the "for real" genuine love and relationship only a bunch of smelly, cursing and yet so honorable young men can offer. You would think by now I would realize all the benefits to life my son has to teach me.

Not to mention the ton of victory hugs Patrick always managed to obtain from the gorgeous "hockey fans".

Nice.

Dena L. Gassner lives in Franklin, where she is director of the Center for Understanding.



THE JESUS I WANT TO MEET

Commentary by Laura Crain

I almost cried at church today. No, it wasn't a moving praise and worship song or a well told story from the pulpit. I almost lost it during a cheesy kid's video about Jesus and the blind man.

We are visiting new churches. Not traditionally my favorite thing to do. It's significantly more challenging due to our oldest son's autism. For the past few weeks, I've been calling churches asking about their children with disabilities programs. What they believe or practice hasn't really come up. ("You handle poisonous snakes? But, are they BIG snakes?") Anyway, we found one that passed the interview process and we all piled in the SUV to go try it out.

Everyone was very friendly, but in a non-creepy sort of way. I ended up going with Peyton to his class since it will take a few weeks to find him a "buddy" to accompany him. This was really an okay arrangement for me. To be honest, I prefer coloring and eating animal crackers to most worship services.

Peyton looks just like most four year olds, but after a few minutes, some differences are apparent. He doesn't talk. He doesn't look at you when you talk. He makes strange noises (echolalia I think it's called). He often throws things with no warning (the guy at the next table at Famous Dave's could attest to this). The kids are four so they started asking me questions.

"Why doesn't he talk?"

"Well, he has autism."

"Umm, I don't know what that is."

"God made him a little different and he can't talk and he makes some funny noises but he is a lot like you—he likes to play just like you."

"Oh...does he have teeth?"

"Yes."

Now that all the important questions had been answered, the kids just seemed to accept the non-talking boy and his mom (who by the way was quickly discovered to be the best at coloring). We colored our sheet and ate the Graham Crackers and went into the "big room" for the video.

It was about Jesus healing the blind man. It was written for four year olds, but the main details were still there. Jesus had compassion on the man who was blind and he healed him. The man had a need and Jesus met that need. Nobody tried to tell the man that his blindness was part of God's "Perfect Plan".

So, I felt like crying. I bit my lip and thought about the humiliation I would forever be bringing on myself and my family by sobbing during a kid's video and I managed to recover. I am still wondering, though. Why does Jesus often not heal those who are crying out in agony? We have all these books explaining the spiritual reasons, but the Jesus in the Bible didn't seem to have read those books. He healed those who were sick.

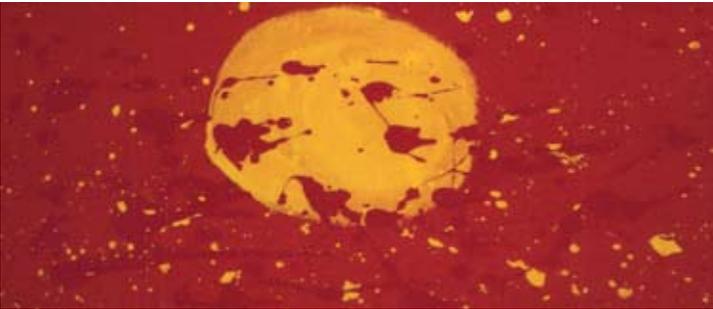
Where is that Jesus? I want to talk to him.

Laura Crain is the mom of two boys. She is also coordinator for the Rutherford County Family Support Program.



Untitled, Steven Kirby

Steven Kirby creates his art at Open Arms Care in Knoxville. He enjoys painting. Mr. Kirby has many different styles and sizes, and his paintings reflect his easy-going personality.



Untitled, Michael Vineyard

Michael Vineyard's paintings are usually small. He enjoys painting when he chooses at Open Arms Care in Knoxville. Mr. Vineyard loves country music and enjoys playing music trivia.

TIME BOMB

by *Spencer Jackson*

I am a time bomb.
 Each tick of the clock
 Brings me closer to that fateful moment
 When everything changes.
 Yet I am forced to wait out the time until then—
 Until my whole world is turned upside down.
 Until the chime signifies the changing hour
 And I must step into a new phase of my life
 And I am forced to accept the facts
 Of my circumstance.
 But until then, I will live my life
 One day at a time
 Putting my faith and life
 In the hands of the Clockmaker
 Who knows the true worth of every clock
 Because He made them all
 And will continue to restore them
 To the purpose for which He made them
 Until the day
 When time is different
 And the clock ticks
 To a different rhythm
 That will never falter.

Spencer Jackson is 23 years old and lives in Tullahoma. Mr. Jackson has cerebral palsy and is a Youth Leadership Forum graduate (2002). He is pursuing a degree in accounting at Middle Tennessee State University.

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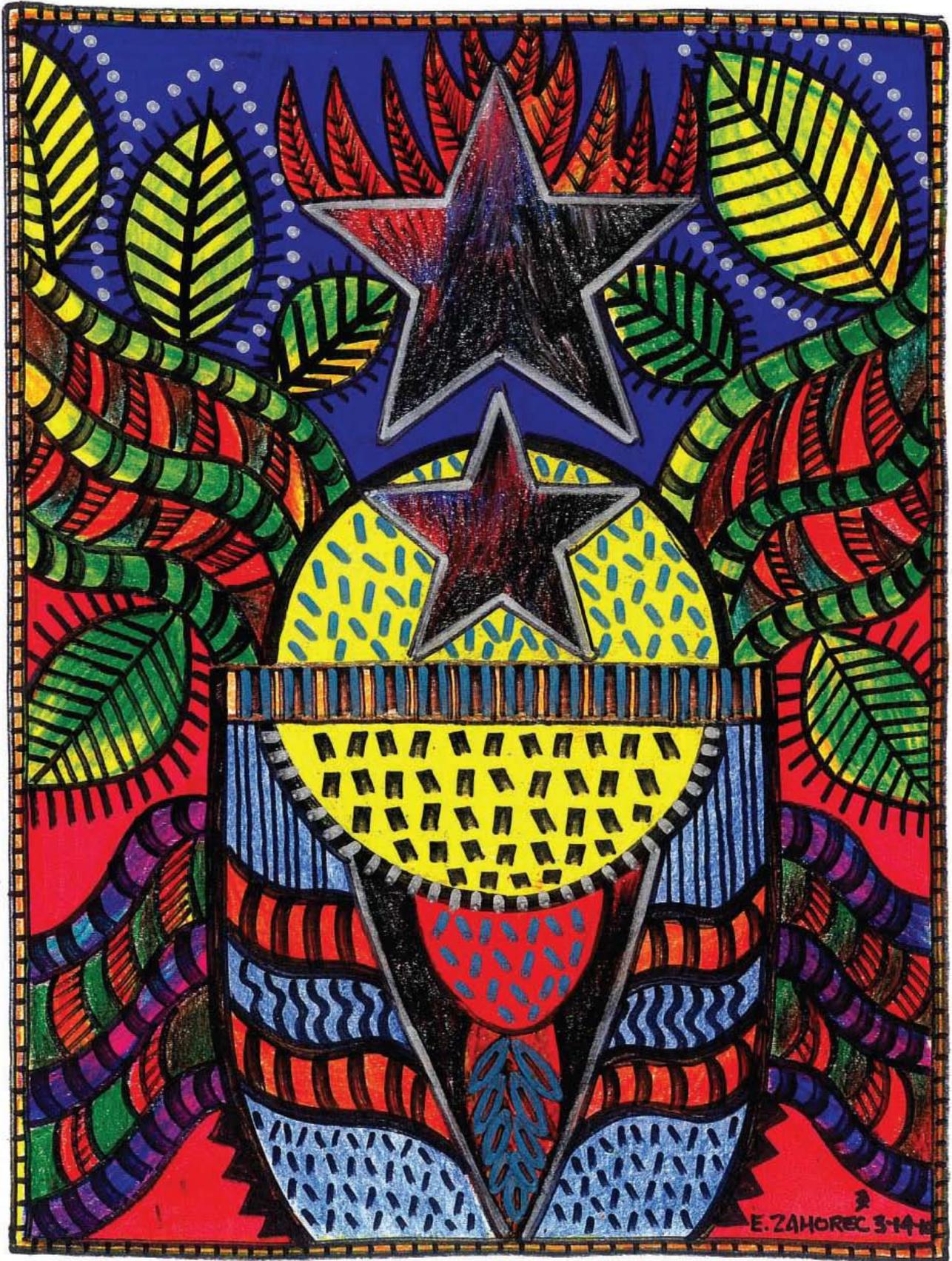
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Untitled, Ellen Jean Zahorec

Ellen Jean Zahorec lives in Hixson and uses her art to gain a sense of control and calm over a severe depressive disorder. Ms. Zahorec has an MFA from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This work is one of 35 in her "Meditation Series" referencing birth, death and rebirth.

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