

## Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Celebrated

*Creative Expressions Art & Music Show draws crowd*

**Greensburg, PA, March 27, 2014** — Attendees from throughout Westmoreland County and beyond celebrated IDD month at the Greensburg Garden and Civic Center on Friday, March 17, for the fourth annual Creative Expressions Art and Music show. This year's theme for IDD Month is "Giving Back to the Community." The event was co-sponsored by Seton Hill Art Therapy program, Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg Art Center, and Latrobe Art Center with support from the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County, affiliated with the Pittsburgh Foundation.



Talent in the visual and performing arts was on display in full force, with the day beginning with a concert emceed by Rocco. Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas welcomed the audience, noting that the performers on stage have more commonalities with those in the audience than they do differences. Consumers from the Community Living Care ensemble and choir sang several numbers and performed on tone bells and rhythm instruments accompanied by Annette Waller, Director of the Creative Arts & Wellness Program at Community Living Care in Greensburg. The concert continued with a piano performance by Matthew, bell ringing performance by Clelian Heights and a drum performance by Christopher.

The celebration moved next to the Art Show hosted by Keri. On display was a vast array of paintings, mixed media pieces, collages, and displays arranged throughout the Iris and Laurel rooms. Refreshments were provided by Chick-fil-A at Eastgate and Greengate as well as Ski's and Nick's Catering. The Clelian Heights Dancers performed a spirited routine to Katy Perry's "Roar" and the Clelian Heights Cheerleaders also performed to several songs.



Among the many pieces featured were works by RJ of Ligonier and Keri of Irwin. In particular, RJ's painting of a trout attracted a lot of attention. RJ attended the reception with his mother Pam and father Rich, who owns the Loyalhanna Fishing Post in Ligonier. While the artist has fished for some time with his father, his interest and talent in painting trout and other animals emerged in 2013 when Laura, of RJ's Community Living Care group home, encouraged him. He only paints what he likes—fish, bears, moose and cabins—delights in giving his paintings to the important people in his life.



Keri, who has been painting for seven years and takes art lessons each week, is a talented artist whose lifelike acrylic of a yellow rose was painted for her grandfather. At the show she commented, "I have hopes that more people become aware that IDD people have abilities and talents beyond anything they imagined. I would like them to know that we are the world's biggest untapped resource for employment." She then shared that this painting and another in the show of a dolphin are her favorites. Keri's work was featured in a one-woman show in New Kensington, where her pieces sold out. She also creates art cards in a multi-step process of painting the backgrounds and embossing designs atop them with assistance from staff members at Paula Teacher & Associates, Inc. Keri's cards are available for purchase at the Creative Production Center in Verona, PA.

The event was organized by the Westmoreland County IDD Awareness committee. The committee members consist of individuals with an intellectual disability, family members, advocates, service professionals, community volunteers and County Developmental Services staff. Through this collaborative effort, fruitful partnerships have been forged with community entities that previously had little or no connection with the IDD service system making for greater outreach and the increase in community awareness.

