

UNIQUE EXHIBIT



Noelle Bye, Times-Gazette.com

Artist Terri Meyer hangs a portrait during the installation of an exhibit, featuring residents of the Kingston of Ashland, on display through Dec. 30 in the retirement facility's sunroom.

Paintings are of Ashland retirement facility residents

By NOELLE BYE
Staff Writer

Detailed through oil and watercolor paintings, faces of wisdom and endurance fill Kingston of Ashland's sunroom.

Some stared boldly at the four artists who had descended upon the retirement facility throughout the year. Others seemed shy, resting their heads in their hands, seeming flattered and embarrassed by the attention.

Since January, artists Terri Meyer, Sharon Weaver, Karen Jennings and Jane Johnson have visited Kingston once or twice a month, capturing the likenesses of 12 residents from different angles during two- to three-hour sittings.

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A series of portraits, featuring residents of the Kingston of Ashland, are on display through Dec. 30. Artists Terri Meyer, Sharon Weaver, Karen Jennings and Jane Johnson have worked on the live portraits since January, visiting the retirement facility once or twice a month.



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Artist Terri Meyer hangs a portrait during the installation of an exhibit, featuring residents of the Kingston of Ashland, on display through Dec. 30 in the retirement facility's sunroom.



Artist Terri Meyer hangs a portrait as Karen Jennings makes sure it is level during the installation of an exhibit, featuring residents of the Kingston of Ashland, on display through Dec. 30 in the retirement facility's sunroom.



From left, artists Terri Meyer, Sharon Weaver and Karen Jennings install an exhibit of portraits, featuring residents of the Kingston of Ashland, on display through Dec. 30 in the retirement facility's sunroom.

project because they felt special."

Good gave Meyer a tour of the facility and Meyer decided the sunroom, with its windows and ample space, was the ideal spot for the portraits.

"It's great practice for us, having a live model," Meyer said. "It makes our skills so much better. You see in a year how much you've grown, just because you're working from life."

At first, many of the residents were hesitant to sign up. But once they saw their more intrepid peers' paintings, they were eager to have their own likenesses depicted.

"I think we all love painting people," Jennings said. "But this became a real pleasant surprise or treasure at the end when we got to know the residents."

Though the men weren't as keen on modeling during this first go-round, Weaver said one man has since asked to be a part of the



From left, artists Karen Jennings, Terri Meyer and Sharon Weaver install an exhibit of portraits, featuring residents of the Kingston of Ashland, on display through Dec. 30 in the retirement facility's sunroom.

project when the artists return next year.

"It's not that it was unexpected, but it was so nice and lovely getting to talk with them and seeing the excitement they had," Weaver said. "There was a waiting list to sign up for our poses."

The artists faced unique challenges in working with

senior citizens. Due to various illnesses, some of them struggled to sit still for long periods, Meyer said. In those cases, the artists gave their subjects frequent breaks and would take reference photos, if needed.

The artists only used the photos as a last resort, to keep the depictions as natural as possible, Meyer said.

Meyer gave the prints to the residents as a thank-you gift for posing.

The experience benefited the residents as much as the painters.

"While I sat there for the painting, people stopped by and watched it," resident Vesta Marlin said. "It was enjoyable to talk to visitors during that time. The painters knew their onions."

The social aspect of the project was as valuable as the art it produced.

"It's a very rich experience to be able to go in and make friends," Meyer said. "Every time I go in, I know all their names now. It's like a big family. And I guess I never realized what a nursing home was like until I went there, and it gave me a totally different perspective on the relationships. Because there's a lot of networking between people, there are friendships that develop and friendships with the staff. And it's really a nice community."