

?You reminded me that I am an artist? ? CHATS rekindles senior creativity at art showcase



Everyone has a special talent, but whether we use it ? and how often ? can be a different story.

On Saturday, CHATS ? Community & Home Assistance to Seniors ? hosted a unique showcase of artistic talent through their first Community Arts Showcase.

Featuring paintings, sculptures, handmade jewellery, pottery and textiles, the show, which was held at the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, was the brainchild of Alexis Gada, a Caregiver Education Counsellor at CHATS.

?Things like hobbies and things we do for self-care and to bring us joy often come up ? and art is one of those things that comes up every now and again, so I had it on my mind,? Gada explains. ?One of my clients shared with me that her husband used to write her poetry and I thought to myself, these are things that would more or less be invisible in our community because they don't talk about it unless somebody asks.

?CHATS is always trying to make sure that we are amplifying the visibility of older adults in the community, so any opportunity to do that is a good opportunity. I thought to myself, wouldn't it be fun if I sort of find out about who has all these talents and would they be willing to loan their work to show so that the community could enjoy it??

The majority of work submitted by the talented seniors was a mix of the passions they pursue on their own time, but with some works from art therapy programs ? such as one created through one such program at Markham Stouffville Hospital ? in the mix as well.

?For the most part, people were absolutely happy [to share their work] but some people were a little shy or thought maybe their stuff wasn't ?good enough,' but even those people came around at the last minute and said, ?Actually, I would really like to put my work in.' It was great to see them get the courage with that sort of thing.

?The hope is it will also inspire older adults to get involved and start hobbies. Some of our pieces are from people who only started this story after retirement versus the people who had artistic expression in their lives forever. Our hope is we can start to make this an annual event.?

Given the feedback they received from CHATS participants in the lead up to the January 18 event, that's one hope that could very well come to pass.

?A lot of participants have thanked me for doing this because not only does it give them an opportunity to show their work, but as

one of our participants said, 'thank you for doing this because you reminded me that I am an artist.' That was a really nice [piece] of feedback to get because in our lives, it gets so busy,' says Gada. 'We hope that we can continue to inspire people and get people to come out and be involved in something that is easy to participate in and to appreciate. We have a few art galleries in sort of the York Region area, but something like this? I guess it is a little more fun because it is right in your community, it is closer to home, and there's faces to the names!'

By Brock Weir