

Avenues Art Program - a canvas of creativity and entrepreneurship

Cindy Krupski is one of four Avenues artists selected for Brickton Art Center's AIR (artist-in-residence) program.

Read full story on page 2



Art program a canvas of creativity – and entrepreneurship

What started as a creative outlet for our participants to express their artistic talents has evolved into a thriving, self-funded program that has also enabled several of Avenues’ artists to become entrepreneurs.

Brickton Art Center AIR partnership takes flight!

Thanks to an initial grant from the Park Ridge Noon Kiwanis, Avenues was able to partner with Brickton Art Center, our neighbor at 306 Busse Highway. Through the years, the association has had a very positive impact on Avenues’ art program and the artists themselves. So much so that four of our artists – Cindy Krupski, Denise Hacke, Brian Ray and Jeff Jones – have been selected to pilot a new art program called AIR (Artists-in-Residence). The program provides 20 hours (two hours a week) of intensive, individualized art training through a wide variety of materials, and is intended to increase confidence in the artists. “We are thrilled to be launching this new program with Avenues,” said Alyssa Harris, Brickton’s Outreach Director and the art therapist leading the AIR Program. “Several of the participants showed an interest and talent for their art beyond what was feasible in the monthly class, and this offers the opportunity for these artists to work in a studio setting and develop their own style and body of work.”

Early in 2016, there will be a public art reception at Brickton that will showcase the artwork created by the four AIR program artists. At the exhibit, the art will be available for purchase, with the proceeds being split between the four artists and supplementing the AIR program for future sessions to reach more artists.

Avenues artists - expressive entrepreneurs

The community partnership with Brickton is just one facet of Avenues’ art program. Since 2009, more than 40 participants have been part of the popular art program, thanks to Home Based Services Facilitator Elaina Kray who volunteered to conduct art classes with the help of local artists and donated supplies. Six years later, she is still volunteering, and with the assistance of Case Manager Gina Mailhiot, shares her artistic passion and skills in class sessions that are held twice a month for nearly eight months of the year.

In return, Avenues’ artists have developed confidence and self-esteem while creating different works of art including oil, watercolor and acrylic paintings; plus ceramics, beadwork, and many craft projects.

Their creativity spawned another outlet for their talents. In the fall of 2012 at the *Spotlight on Wine*, several paintings donated by Avenues’ artists sold on a special silent auction, with the proceeds directly funding the art program. That first year nearly \$750 was raised. Since then, Avenues’ artists have sold their work at other fundraising events, and to date, more than \$4,000 has been earned to support the program.



AIR (artist-in-residence) program artists display their recent creations. From left, Alyssa Harris, Brickton Art Center; artists Brian Ray, Cindy Krupski, Jeff Jones, Denise Hacke; and Art Institute intern Sarah Tyler.



a. *At the Spotlight on Wine, Barclay Marcell is the proud silent auction winner of the painting by Avenues’ artist Kelly Doheny.*

b. *A sampling of the paintings that sold at the Spotlight on Wine.*

c. *Art program facilitator and staff member Elaina Kray (left) along with Case Manager Gina Mailhiot work with artist Mary Feight.*



From our Executive Director
Robert Okazaki

No budget means no cash for Illinois in 2016

By the time you read this, Illinois will have gone a full six months without a current fiscal year budget. Both Republican Governor Bruce Rauner and Democratic House Leader Michael Madigan remain at odds; neither individual has shown any willingness to bring this impasse to a conclusion.

Without a budget, Illinois Comptroller Leslie Munger had no legal authority to pay bills on Illinois' behalf. However, early in this process, the Governor and Legislature approved payments for State of Illinois employees, elementary and secondary education and other essential services.

Left out of the essential services category were payments to Avenues and other support organizations assisting over 45,000 Illinoisians with disabilities. Both Rauner and Madigan assumed that as the impasse played out, the other would be blamed for closings and loss of needed services. The public outcry would then force the other into a budget compromise.

However, Illinois uses federal matching funds (Medicaid) to pay for most services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Buried in the federal regulations is a stipulation that if a state accepts Medicaid funds for services, it must pay its providers in a "timely" manner. Disability advocates sued Illinois and the court ruled that payments to providers must be made every month.

The court ruling and payment agreements mean that 90% of all state expenditures are now being made. Unfortunately, disability services including the Autism Program of Illinois, Arc LifeSpan, Family Support Network, Family Transition Program, respite services and other advocacy and information services were not included in the court order and have either closed or substantially scaled back their services.

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However, since these cuts did not impact existing residential services, individuals with disabilities did not end up on the street. No big public outcry so Rauner and Madigan lost the public forum they were looking for to blame each other. Thus began the six-month long stare down to see who will blink first.

Problem is, without a budget, Illinois will run out of cash sometime after the first of the year. No one can even surmise what would take place if this should happen. State employees, schools, public services and the court orders will still require payments to be made. Bankruptcy is not an option. The \$54 billion dollar question is "what would happen if Illinois just stopped paying for everything?"

Avenues has been working on an answer to this question for the past 24 years. Our strategic plan from 1991 directed us to begin saving for the rainy day. Today, through your generosity, we have the ability to weather this current storm and prepare ourselves to deal with whatever the state does or does not do.

Our 2014-15 strategic plan continues this directive; just as we work to develop independence and self-sufficiency for our individuals with autism, Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy and other intellectual, physical and developmental disabilities, Avenues itself needs to be as self-sufficient as possible

Thus, we will continue to look to philanthropy and other non-governmental sources to support the people and programs of Avenues. In 1953, we relied solely on the generosity of the community to get our fledgling organization off the ground. What was old becomes new again and as government funding continues to change, it will be you and others in our community of support that will be the key to the future for the people of Avenues.

AT&T contributes \$75,000 to support workforce development training

On Thursday, November 12 at the Work Center in Wheeling, Avenues was presented with a \$75,000 contribution by AT&T Illinois to support workforce development training and enrich Avenues' clients everyday lives.

We are grateful to Representative Michael McAuliffe, (R) 20th District, who introduced Avenues to the AT&T Illinois affairs team that was responsible for the contribution.

The check was presented to Avenues' Executive Director Bob Okazaki by Paul La Schiazza, President of AT&T Illinois, and guests included many AT&T representatives, AT&T Pioneers, Avenues' Board of Directors members, legislators, friends and supporters.

Bob Okazaki thanked AT&T for their long term support of Avenues. "In 1986 AT&T Pioneers came to our assistance after a devastating flood at one of our workforce development centers. Three decades later they are active volunteers, lending their time and expertise. AT&T's contribution to our workforce development programs is one more example of the commitment the people of AT&T have to support our community."



Paul La Schiazza, President of AT&T Illinois (blue shirt), presents Avenues with a \$75,000 contribution to support workforce development training.

Spotlight on Wine pours record earnings

Under the world's largest stained glass Tiffany dome, *Avenues Spotlight on Wine* shone brightly at the Chicago Cultural Center on Thursday, October 29. The grand Preston Bradley Hall with its gilded mosaics and ornate fixtures was an elegant setting for Avenues' popular annual event, sponsored by the Chicago Partnership Board of Avenues to Independence.

Now in its second decade, this year's *Spotlight on Wine* had the distinction of exceeding both past earnings and attendance records. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Chicago Partnership Board, generous sponsors, and the more than 250 guests who attended, a record \$51,000 was

earned to support the initiative, "Getting people to work and putting people to work."

Getting people to work, Putting people to work

This year's proceeds will specifically provide job training, employment opportunities and transportation services for the more than 200 people that Avenues serves. Jolene Wise Silverman, Chair of the *Spotlight on Wine* stated, "Your support will provide a ride to work...a paycheck... independence and dignity...and most importantly, change lives by letting the people of Avenues be a part of the community in every way."

While sampling six premier wines from Atlas Imports and a variety of tempting hors d'oeuvres from Hel's Kitchen Catering, guests were able to support these initiatives in several interesting ways. These included both live and silent auctions, a wide selection of raffle prizes, and a specialty wine raffle. Additionally, several items (paintings, coaster sets, and wine glasses) painted by participants in Avenues' art program were sold and those proceeds directly benefitted the art program. (see page 2)

More photos are available in the Media Gallery at avenuestoindependence.org



a. Chicago Partnership Board member and auctioneer Paul Carlisle (right) congratulates Diana Krett and Kyle Ingold, who won the bid for Bears vs Packers tickets at Lambeau Field.



b. Board of Directors member Linda Buggy and her husband Kevin (left) sample some of the delicious



wines provided by Jim Cosma of Atlas Imports (right).
c. Jolene Wise Silverman, Chair of the *Spotlight on Wine*, (right) welcomes guests along with Julie Carlisle, next year's chair.



d. Chicago Partnership Board member Katie Seiwert, along with her mom Kathy and sister Colleen, pose for an Instagram shot.



e. Joining in the fun are (from left) Andrew Keyt, and Chicago Partnership Board member Brian Stewart, and Board President Collin Sasser.

We thank our Spotlight on Wine sponsors:

Premier Cru Level

- Anna C. Gamble Foundation
- Collin Sasser and Alison Whittington
- Wintrust

Reserve Level

- Diana Almazan

- Dreamworks Graphics Communications/Ron Bjelopetrovich
- Fidelity National Title Company
- Robert and Lynn Goldschmidt
- Hub International
- MB Financial
- Silverman Consulting
- Weiss-Ham Foundation

Old Vine Level

- Pete and Cindy Allcox
- Joseph and Lauren Barron
- Amy Bergren
- Paul and Rebecca Carlisle
- Dennis and Joann DeMoss
- Jerry and Sue Feldman
- John and Carol McKinnon
- Steve and Jolene Silverman

- Brian and Sheri Stewart
- Wells Fargo Advisors/ Michael Palet

Vin de Table Level

- Marc and Sheila Blumenthal
- Michelle and Steve Cucchiaro
- Decision Bridge

- Thomas and Cathy Donovan
- Clarence Herbst
- Gary and Gail Lissner
- Terry and Kath Lynch

Beyond the Runway Tea and Fashion Show a “runaway” success!



Models Nora Prindiville, Cindy Wroblewski, Amanda Krischke and Adam Randazzo strut down the runway.

The Fourth Annual “Beyond the Runway” Tea and Fashion Show was one of the most anticipated events of the year, especially for the “models” from Avenues’ Thrift Shoppe AveVenture program. Even a thirty minute power failure during setup didn’t

diminish the excitement as the Thrift Shoppe participants, committee members, volunteers and the staff of the Hilton Chicago/Northbrook Hotel continued their preparations in the dark.

It was a classic example of how the show must go on! And the show went on to raise record earnings. Nearly \$22,000 was raised to benefit the Avenues’ Thrift Shoppe AveVenture program, which provides participants with skills needed to work in a retail setting, deliver exceptional customer service and learn to work with fellow employees as an effective team.

More than 245 guests attended the event on Sunday, September 20. As they enjoyed a light luncheon and traditional tea service, guests were treated to a fashion show featuring outfits for sale from the Thrift Shoppe. Committee Chair Pat Grimes and Co-chair Jeanne Doheny provided lively commentary about the fashions and the models.

Guests also had the chance to win raffle prizes, bid on silent auction items, and purchase a large selection of quality household, clothing, and seasonal items from the Thrift Shoppe. In the boutique area, guests were also able to purchase lovely handmade items made by the AveVenture program participants.

“Beyond the Runway”, besides being a financial success, reaped many other immeasurable rewards. Committee Chair Pat Grimes summed it up best when she called it, “The heartwarming and feel-good event of the year and a definite confidence builder for the all of the clients who participate. It’s become a true labor of love and fun for all!”

View more pictures in the Media Gallery avenuestoindependence.org

Please support the AveVenture program by donating your gently used clothing and household items to the Thrift Shoppe, 7710 W. Touhy in Chicago. Call (773) 631-6230 for more information.



Lenore Sierzega models a party outfit.



Jessica Oliva can’t decide which coat to purchase!



In the boutique, Jean Smith displays some of the gift bags hand decorated by AveVenture participants.

Grant from Coleman Foundation expands AveVenture program

Thanks to a generous grant from the Coleman Foundation, the AveVenture program was expanded to include 12 participants. Some of the participants who have been in the program have started job searches and developed their own businesses.



Shannan Machnica, Connie Koshaba and JJ Mascha are receiving retail skill training as participants of the AveVenture program.

We thank our Tea and Fashion Show sponsors:

High Tea Sponsor

Andres and Zoraida Cornejo

Dessert Sponsor

Tom and Danka Tasiopoulos,
The Chicago Burger Co.

Centerpiece Sponsor

Bonnie Reinhart
Marilyn Drury-Katillo

Invitation Sponsor

Jacki Kimel

Memento Sponsor

Steven Godek,
GPM Mfg., Inc.

Event Sponsors

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JoAnn Casali

Margaret Comer

Rosemary Cwik

Joy Duszynski

Ann Marie Ehrlich

Barbara Heerman

Mary Johnson

Terri Kaisling

Lynn Kalanik

Jill Liska

Nancy Lyons

Kathleen McMahon

Patricia Maroney

Mike MaRous

Judith Matijevic

Marge O’Donnell

Debbie Schmidt

Susan Stone

Jolene Wise

Silverman

PepsiCo Enable Team and Avenues Suburban Partnership Board sponsor popular parties!

Picnicking with PepsiCo!

Summer may be long gone, but two special events held late in August still provide warm memories for our participants.

For the ninth year, employees and family members of PepsiCo's Enable Resource Group have volunteered their time and talents to host a picnic lunch complete with games, prizes, and good old-fashioned fun. Once again, the grounds of Sasser Family House and

Herbst Family House in Park Ridge were transformed into a picnic and game area for the more than 60 residents who took part in the festivities. Special thanks to PepsiCo employees Maureen Bauer and Melissa Diaz who organized the picnic; Greg Metzler who took the photo portraits; Maureen Meier who coordinated the product and prize donations; retired PepsiCo employee Karen Clarke for all her work with the Enable team; and the volunteer staff from the Quaker facility in Bridgeview, Illinois.



Jennifer Ross cuddles with one of the five therapy dogs that entertained our participants.



Lori Guthrie (left) and Sharon Duggan enjoy a game of bingo.



Who are those masked men? Having fun with their disguises in the photo booth are David Blachut (left) and Craig Dietrich.

Surfin' USA makes big waves at the Work Center

It was surf up for our workers at the Wheeling Work Center on August 27, when everyone enjoyed a bbq luncheon, played games, rocked to popular beach and summer tunes, and posed for their personal surfin' photo. And, to help work off those extra calories,

Zumba classes kept everyone shakin' as well as surfin'.

Thanks to the Suburban Partnership Board and the Park Ridge Rotary Club for sponsoring the very popular event!

View more photos from these events on the Media Gallery at avenuestoIndependence.org



Kathleen Swinich gets behind the wheel of the Surfin' USA jeep for a photo op, thanks to Ed and Matt Coyne who brought the popular jeep to the Work Center.



Professional Zumba exercise classes were introduced at the party, thanks to the efforts of the Suburban Partnership Board. The classes were so popular that the Work Center continues to sponsor them twice a week.



Thanks to Chefs and Suburban Partnership Board members Marc Blumenthal (left) and Bob Border who grilled more than 150 burgers

#GIVINGTUESDAY

In 24 hours, Avenues received \$84,186 from donors on Giving Tuesday, which included the \$20,000 Challenge Grant from the Coleman Foundation. We are grateful to the Coleman Foundation and the generosity of all our donors.

Generous Foundation Support

Avenues is thankful for the grants we received since our last publication.

G.J. Aigner Foundation, Inc.
- Thrift Shoppe AveVenture Program

Fred Brunner Foundation
- Nursing Services

Butler Family Foundation
- Employment Options

RR Donnelley Foundation
- Job Placement Program

Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation
- Job Placement Program

George M. Eisenberg Foundation for Charities
- CPR training and equipment

Edmond and Alice Opler Foundation
- Job Placement Program

Avenues to Independence gets 500 "likes" on Facebook!

Please continue to spread the word about Avenues on social media.

Thanks to everyone who helped us reach our goal. On to 1000!

Great Things Happen at Avenues!

Recycling Avenue donates 10 gift-filled boxes to Operation Christmas Child.



From left, volunteer Brian Harrison along with Recycling Avenue workers Chris Sawka (with his dad Steve), Colleen Lynch, Stephanie Wolowiec and Matt Palmore prepare gift boxes containing toys, school supplies and toiletries for children in need around the world.

Work Center celebrates Holidays!



Doreen Aquado and Theresa Feldton (left) and Wendy Jones (right) enjoy their Thanksgiving turkey luncheon and pumpkin pie.



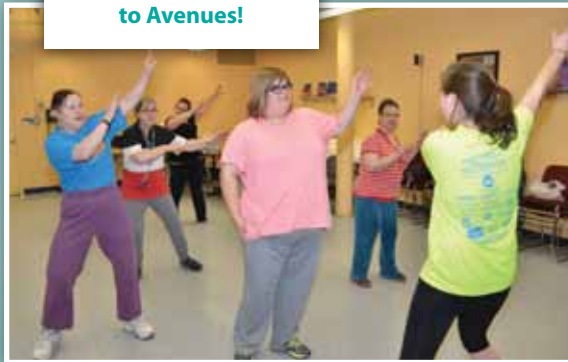
Suburban Partnership Board member Sara McKittrick (left) and chair Sue Feldman celebrate the Jingle Bell Rock holiday party with John Drinkwater, and Santa makes a grand entrance on his "sleigh" thanks to Board members Matt and Ed Coyne.

1 worker = 50,000 packages!



Kudos to worker David Stepek who assembled more than 50,000 blister seal packs at the Work Center in 2015, including more than 42,000 for Griffin Shoe Care products.

Fitness Club comes to Avenues!

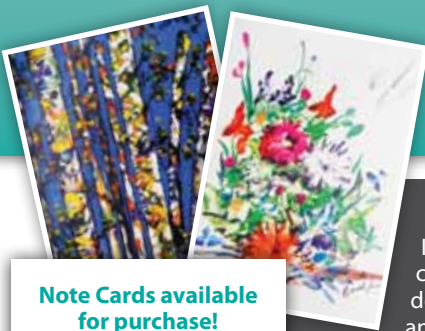


Twice a month Case Manager Katie Garrity (right) conducts popular fitness classes. Katie shares her passion for being active with the participants, "It's a fun way for clients to take control of their health and learn to like working out."

Congressman Robert Dold (IL-10) launches Disability Advisory Board at Avenues.



Worker Matthew Nelson visits with Rep. Dold on a tour of the Work Center. Avenues will be collaborating with the Disability Advisory Board formed by Rep. Dold to address local and federal issues affecting individuals with intellectual and development disabilities.



Note Cards available for purchase!

Nature themed note cards designed by artist Carol Priebe Styart and packaged by Avenues to Independence workers can be purchased online. There are 10 different designs to choose from, and the cards are packaged 10 to a box. The cost per box is \$15, plus a \$5 shipping and handling fee. Thanks to a donation from Avenues' friend Clarence Herbst, the entire \$15 purchase will support Avenues' employment and residential programs. Please go to the link <http://avenuestoindependence.org/notecards/> to view the card selections and place your order.

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Celebrate with Avenues in 2016!



Love Affair Gala
Havana Nights
 Saturday, February 20, 2016
 6pm
 The Loews Hotel * Rosemont



19th annual Irish Fest
Sunday, March 13, 2016 2 PM

Cotillion Banquets
Palatine

Watch for your invites in the mail
 or visit avenuestoindependence.org

Calendar of Events

2/20 Love Affair
 3/13 Irish Fest

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Avenues to Independence is dedicated to putting aside old ideas about what is possible.

We work in partnership with the community to support and encourage people with disabilities to lead the lives they choose. Our success will eventually be measured by how little we are needed.

Avenues to Independence is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization providing services for adults with intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities. All services and employment are provided on an equal opportunity basis. Avenues is accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities).