

For Immediate Release

Companions on the Journey Sponsors First Annual Prisoner Art Show and Auction

Westville, Indiana (April 7, 2009)--On Friday, March 27, 2009, Companions on the Journey, a community-based offender re-entry program, sponsored its first annual prisoner art show and auction entitled "An Encounter with Unexpected Beauty."

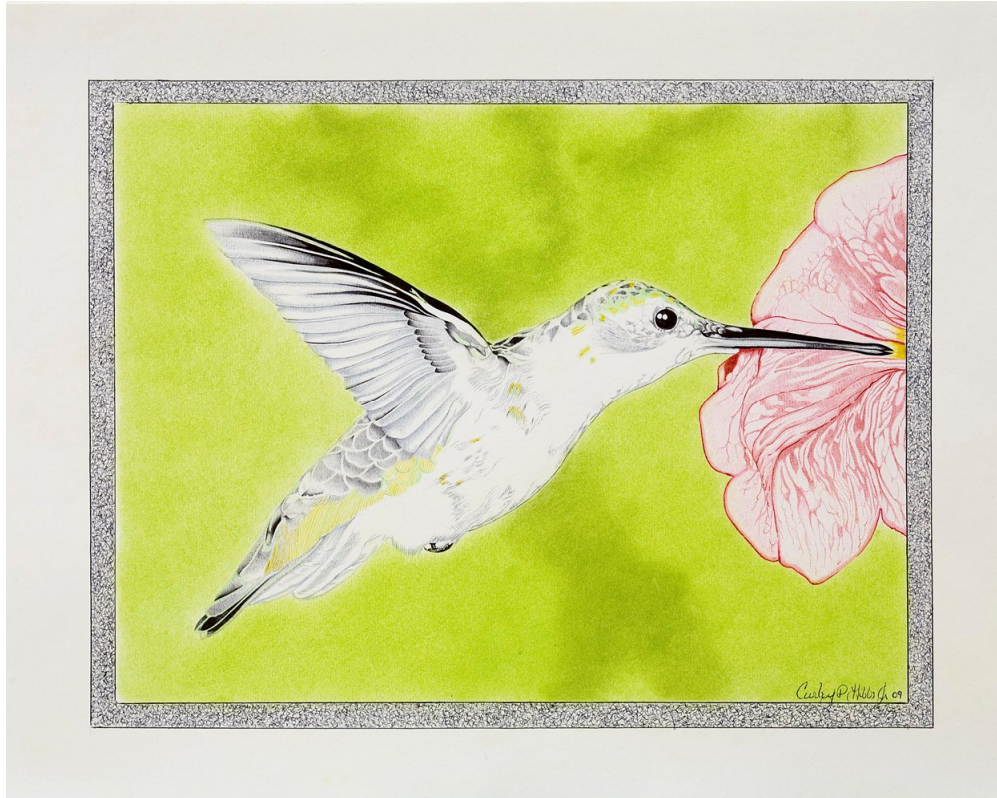
Fifty-seven pieces of art were produced by inmates at Westville Correctional Facility and submitted for consideration. Of those, 47 were selected by the Art Selection Committee to be sold by silent auction. In addition, 14 local businesses donated gift baskets/certificates for auction. The response from the community was astounding. Expecting approximately 75 – 100 individuals to attend the event, over 150 actually came out to support the auction.



Example of the offender artwork

The show was truly a community effort. Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in Granger, Indiana donated the space, staff, hors d'oeuvres, gratuity, and wine worth \$3,000. Studio Art Classes provided \$500 worth of supplies and manpower to prepare and mount the art and make carrying cases. A local artist donated supplies and time to set up the art show. A professional photographer agreed to photograph the event, and a professional videographer recorded and produced a DVD for free.

The silent auction brought in approximately \$3,000, with one exceptional piece selling for \$500. One third of the sale price of the art will support Camp New Happenings, the Episcopal Church Diocese of Northern Indiana's summer camp for prisoners' children. Without intervention, children of prisoners face a 70% chance of going to prison themselves.



Example of the offender artwork

The project director began the program by purchasing approximately \$300 worth of art supplies/instruction books and taking them to Westville Correctional Facility last fall. Additional art supplies were donated by “friends” of the project. Companions went to the prison almost every Thursday to take donated supplies and to provide encouragement to the artists. The prisoners will receive one third the sale price of their art, but participated primarily as an opportunity to give back to the Community.

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