

By Edward Damon
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WILLIAMSTOWN — Paintings from the Community Access to the Arts' (CATA) Art on Tour program will be on display at the Williamstown Youth Center until next month.

The organization, located in Great Barrington, offers individuals with physical and development disabilities workshops in the visual and performing arts.

"The work is also for sale," CATA founder and Executive Director Sandy Newman said at an opening reception last Thursday night at the youth center. "Fifty percent goes to them as a working artist. The balance comes back to support CATA."

Several of the paintings were created using Artist Realization Technologies (ART), Newman said, a painting technique for people with severe physical disabilities.

"They work with one of our faculty artists, who act as a tracker," Newman said. "They act as the artist's hands."

Each artist uses a laser pointer placed on a headband or a wristband, Newman said. From there, the artist directs the laser to a color wheel to choose what color they want to use.

Another method involves a yardstick, Program Associate Jeff Gagnon said. The tracker will bring the yardstick down a canvas and the artist will indicate when to stop, and a mark is made.

"They do that over and over again, until all of a sudden these geometric shapes begin to appear," he said.

A tracker isn't necessarily a visual artist, Gagnon said.

"It's a very neutral voice in the creation of the work," he said.

CATA has offered the program since ART inventor Tim Lefens held a residence at the organization in 2008, Newman said.

Gagnon said other artwork on display was created in the organization's Arts in and Arts Out program, which allows participants to attend workshops led by CATA faculty. The program serves 500



people county-wide, Gagnon said. Workshops include painting, collage and sculpture.

David Zahorian, of Great Barrington, has two pieces created at CATA workshops on display.

A painting of two leaves was based on a photograph, he explained.

"We copied them down and got more ideas to what colors we wanted to use," he said.

"Drawing plants and birds and animals — I love doing it," he added. "It's difficult for me, but I challenge myself with the things that I want to do more."

Fellow CATA attendee Eric Shumann will have two pieces on display. One is of

a Mandala, a geometric symbol in the Buddhist tradition that represents the universe. Another piece is a charcoal drawing of a dog.

"[Charcoal] is really messy though, but we had fun doing it," he said.

During Thursday's opening reception, artists were eager to show off their work.

"The thing about CATA is it's a one-of-a-kind place," Shumann said. "Nowhere else is there a place like CATA that I know of. I love it."

For more information about CATA, visit www.communityaccesstothearts.org or call 413-528-5485.

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