

The Center and Chapel Haven Initiate Autism Art Education with Public Sculpture

NEW HAVEN—The Yale Center for British Art and Chapel Haven, a residential school and independent living facility for people with cognitive and social disabilities, are hosting a program to build a public sculpture and raise awareness of autism spectrum disorders.

On Saturday, February 20, 2016, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, individuals on the autism spectrum will create an environmentally inviting bird sanctuary and site specific sculpture at Chapel Haven, located at 1040 Whalley Avenue in New Haven. With this program, pioneered by Linda Friedlaender, Senior Curator of Education, Yale Center for British Art; Tina Menchetti, Art Director, Chapel Haven; and Students for Autism Awareness at Yale (SAAY), under the guidance of the Chicago sculptor Margot McMahon, participants of various ages and social and physical abilities will create art that will beautify the surroundings. The program offers opportunities to work with a variety of materials, to engage in social interaction, and to learn cooperative and communicative skills, in a caring, supportive environment.

“This project encourages collaboration and teaches participants to respect one another while working on a shared goal,” said Friedlaender. “It is also a day for people to have fun, to socialize, and to feel accepted in a safe space.”

“This will also be an opportunity for various community groups to meet and to learn about the wide variety of programs in the area,” said Menchetti.

The event will involve several activities. From 10:00 am to noon, children from the Yale Center for British Art’s Exploring Artism program and from the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Fitness Center will meet indoors to construct prefabricated wooden birdhouses and make nests from colorful telephone wires. From 12:30 to 2:30 pm, teenagers from Hillhouse and Wilbur Cross high schools will work on indoor and outdoor projects, depending on the weather. They will construct planters using waxed paper tubes, wire mesh, and paint. The participants will fill the containers with potting soil and spring flower bulbs. They will bury the planters underground, forming a maze around a large tree, where the students’ birdhouses and nests will hang from its branches. The students will also twist and turn lightweight aluminum piping to create a centerpiece to attract birds.

The art will remain on site at Chapel Haven to welcome the coming spring. Chapel Haven residents will paint a mural of the day's activities, which will be on display at Woolsey Hall at Yale University on World Autism Awareness Day, Saturday, April 2, 2016.

“We are grateful to all those participating in this event. Our Connecticut community is filled with tremendous spirit, generosity, and enthusiasm. We are pleased with this opportunity to provide growth-enhancing experiences for those of all abilities,” said Friedlaender.

The following groups and individuals are collaborating on this project:

ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Fitness Center

Michael Storz, Advisory Board Member

Chapel Haven

Michael Storz, President

Catherine Sullivan DeCarlo, Vice President of Admissions and Marketing

Tina Menchetti, Art Director

Residents of Chapel Haven and their teachers

Exploring Artism, Yale Center for British Art

Linda Friedlaender, Senior Curator of Education

Hillhouse High School

Fallon Daniels, Principal

Wilbur Cross High School

Edith Johnson, Principal

Suzie Luft, Yale University Medical School resident and consulting artist

Margot McMahon, sculptor, author, educator, and consultant

SAAY (Students for Autism Awareness at Yale)

Teen Art Club for Girls with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Yale University

Child Study Center and Yale Center for British Art

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center's collections include more than 2,000 paintings, 200 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 30,000 prints, and 35,000 rare books and manuscripts. More than 30,000 volumes supporting research in British art and related fields are available in the Center's library. Visit the institution online at britishart.yale.edu.

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