



Acadia Hospital

ARTISAN PROJECT "Reflecting Hope and Recovery"



Creating Art, Finding a Passion

ARTISAN PROJECT SPURS TEEN TOWARD SENSE OF PURPOSE

Mariah Trembley loves to create art; and she's good at it. "I enjoy doing art, it comes naturally to me. When I try I can usually come up with something I'm proud of," says the talented teenager from Old Town. But art to her is more than a hobby; it has become a way for her to cope with the stresses of life, and with the depression that began to manifest when she was 11 years old.

"I was really shy when I was younger and it was hard for me in social situations," recalls Mariah. This social anxiety evolved into clinical depression as Mariah was moving into her teenage years. When she was 15 she and her family knew it was time to reach out for professional help. That's when they turned to Acadia Hospital.



While staying at Acadia Mariah was encouraged to sketch and draw, and it was an important part of her recovery. She left the hospital and returned to her family and school, with the depressive symptoms under control. And they were, for a while. But, as is common when dealing with a serious mental illness, the symptoms returned later that year and she was once again admitted to Acadia's adolescent inpatient unit.

During her second visit, Mariah found herself drawn to clay and sculpture, and her interest was encouraged by staff and became a comfort to her. With support from staff and a friend she made on the unit, Mariah turned a corner in her treatment. "I started to realize that I could feel truly happy again, and the world started opening up for me."

"I work with my hands a lot, and when I am doing that I am thinking about what I'm creating, not what's on my mind. This creative space opens up for me whenever I sculpt, paint or draw," says Mariah. "I like adding a wow factor; colors that people wouldn't normally think would go together, stuff like that. I do what appeals to me."

In order to manage her

depression, Mariah began seeing an outpatient therapist at Acadia, and it was this person who told her about the Artisan Project, which exhibits patient art in a special gallery in the hospital. And that's when her art, and her recovery, took a leap forward.

Mariah submitted a beautifully layered, multi-media Andy Warhol-type painting of Marilyn Monroe for consideration, and it was chosen for the Artisan Project exhibit. But it didn't stop there. This past summer Acadia participated in the WLBZ2 Sidewalk Art Show in downtown Bangor as a way to share the patients' art with the broader community. And Mariah and her mother, Claire, spent the entire day at the Acadia table. Mariah ended up selling an original work of art and some prints, and she was also given the Emerging Artist Award for the show, earning a ribbon and a cash prize as well as a free exhibit table at next year's show.

"It was awesome," recalls Mariah, beaming. Every artist starts out like a "starving artist", but the fact that I can work towards a career in art is just amazing."

While Mariah and her family realize that it is important to maintain vigilance when it comes to managing her depression, she has gained a personal strength and maturity that defy her age, and she has passion for her art; and her future. "I've gained life lessons, and I think I notice and appreciate more things than the average person does because of what I've dealt with; I am very tuned in to other people's emotions and feel more compassion than I did before my depression. I've grown into the person I want to be," says Mariah with a smile.



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