

Sunday, April 25, 2010

ARTS&CULTURE

The art of fundraising

Foundation to aid seniors, support artistic talents

By **Janette Williams**
Staff Writer

PASADENA — Launching a charitable foundation for seniors in these tough economic times takes more than just some “talking heads” to attract supporters, Janelle Norton figured.

So Norton, president of the fledgling Sophie Miller Foundation, decided some attention-getting art might send the best message.

Last week, 36 paintings created by seniors involved in the Artists in Residence program at three Episcopal Home Communities, including Scripps/Kensington in Alhambra, were exhibited at the Tournament House in Pasadena.

The idea was to reflect “inspiration, optimism, and fulfillment — a diverse group of pictures reflecting a diverse family of residents,” Norton said.

The diversity stretches to financial means, she said, and the foundation is being started with the goal of adding \$500,000 a year to

help residents of the three home communities who can't afford the full cost.

Many of the 233 residents at Scripps-Kensington came from the now-demolished Scripps Home, a fixture in Altadena since 1912. They joined residents at the first Episcopal Home, started in Alhambra in 1923 by Deaconess Sophie Miller, for whom the foundation is named.

About half the seniors need help with residential fees, Norton said, adding that the present subsidy for the three retirement homes is \$2 million a year.

The new foundation, as well as raising funds and managing previous donations for residents' care, will also support programs such as Artists in Residence that “enrich the lives of older adults, both within and outside our communities' walls,” Norton said.

The Artists in Residence program has proved very popular, showing the residents' depth of talent and vibrancy, she said.

The classes, run by Carole Buss, are serious art education, not occupational therapy, Norton said.

Some artists exhibiting their work were beginners, like 86-year-old Valentine Weber, who took his first art lesson in March



Walt Mancini Staff Photographer

Janelle Morton, president of The Sophie Miller Foundations, speaks to supporters during the “Artist in Residence” exhibit held Tuesday at the Tournament House in Pasadena.

2010. But others have always been involved with art, professionally or as hobbyists, and are brushing off their talents.

Dolores Davis, 83, studied costume design at USC. She has found a new enthusiasm for watercolors in the past five years. Her painting of sunflowers was one of those on exhibit.

“This was the first time I got to concentrate on it, after seven children,” she said, laughing. “It’s wonderful...You can express yourself and bring out your feelings. At our age, you’ve had a lot of different feelings and experiences — things we know we love, things we don’t.”

Betty Riek found a talent she didn’t know she had.

“I went to college as an education major and took an art course and I did not do well,” she recalled. “I thought, ‘Watercolor — phooey on that’ ... I never thought I could paint anything.”

Her watercolor, “Blue Cottage in Winter,” inspired by her husband’s family cottage in Wisconsin, was prominently displayed at Tournament House.

“I still consider myself a beginner,” said Riek. “But I’m beginning to get it together.”

janette.williams@sgvn.com
626-578-6300, ext. 4482