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## Art exhibit is about 'Completing the Journey.' It offers window into hospice through patients' eyes



Christopher Arnott/Hartford Courant

Velta, in wheelchair, is one of the artists in the "Completing the Journey: The Art of Hospice Care" exhibit. (Christopher Arnott/Hartford Courant)



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“Completing the Journey: The Art of Hospice Care” is an art exhibit created by those in hospice care at [Masonicare Hospice & Palliative Care](#) senior/assisted living communities throughout Connecticut. Masonicare hasn’t created a project like this in over 15 years. It’s meant to be much more than an art exhibit and is curated so as to present the artists — some of whom have passed away — as prominently as their art.

The exhibit, constructed so it can tour easily to various Masonicare facilities, had an opening reception in the Hartog Activities Center of [Masonicare at Ashlar Village](#), located at 74 Cheshire Road in Wallingford, on April 28. “Completing the Journey” was only in Wallingford through May 1, then moves on to Masonicare at Greenridge Place in Rocky Hill, where it will go on display starting May 14. Wallingford is the third location following displays in Chester and Mystic, and “Completing the Journey” may be traveling around the state well into next year.

“Completing the Journey” seems rather slight at first glance. It consists of two self-standing screens, each of their sides and end piece covered with small artworks by people in hospice care. The artworks are enhanced with portraits of the artists and brief statements about their art. One reads “Jean enjoyed using the pointillism technique to create a tree. She was able to reminisce about her life and shared her stories. Jean receives visits from all our Complementary Therapists.”

Complementary therapies are those that can be used with conventional medical treatments to improve quality of life by, for example, helping remove stress. They can range from massage to hypnotherapy to homeopathy to art.



Christopher Arnott/Hartford Courant

Sandy Proska, who does expressive arts programs with Masonicare residents. (Christopher Arnott/Hartford Courant)

Masonicare has been promoting “Completing the Journey,” which is open to the general public, as “more than an art show. It’s a window into how creative expression is used in hospice settings to help patients process fear, preserve identity, and connect with loved ones in their final chapter.”

Rebecca Tamsin, the director of counseling and business development, said the exhibit has been in development for two years. The artists generally chose the artistic media they wanted to work with and also chose the subjects of their work. Some of the artworks are based on nostalgia — churches or trees from where the artist grew up or illustrations. Some are abstracts, simple and colorful design that stand out brightly from the more complex or realistic pieces.

All the artists were or are currently in hospice care. Two of the artists were in attendance at the Wallingford opening. Also on hand were dozens of Masonicare staff, including a pair of complementary therapists doing guitar and hand drum duets of “Build Me Up Buttercup” and other songs. Another attendee was the company’s president/CEO J.P. Venoit, who enthusiastically recalled viewing the exhibit at an earlier location only to realize that the artist whose work he was admiring was in a wheelchair right behind him. Others he recognized from seeing them at other Masonicare activities.

“Some of these people have never done art before,” Venoit said. “What’s great about this is that you see the patients and what they’ve done in their lives. It brings back positive memories. It engages them in a different way. It’s nice for families to come and see. It’s a celebration for all of us.”

“Completing the Journey: The Art of Hospice Care” was entirely funded through the Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut, the philanthropic arm of the Masonicare company.

What makes the exhibit particularly special is that there are photos of the artists in the process of making the art, hanging alongside the finished works.



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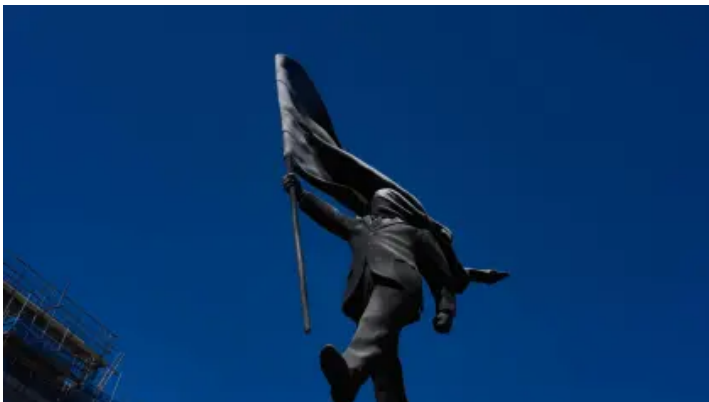
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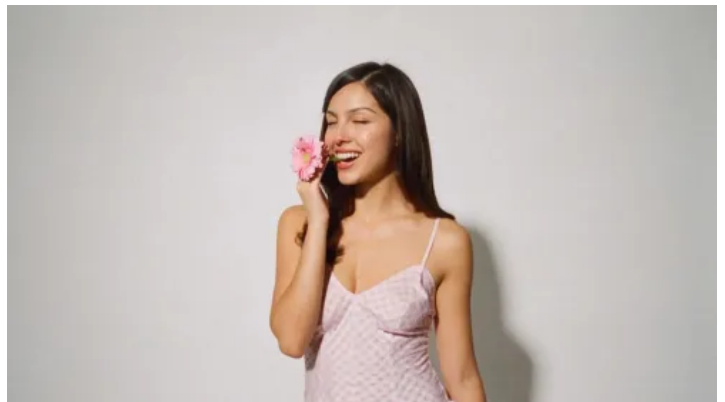
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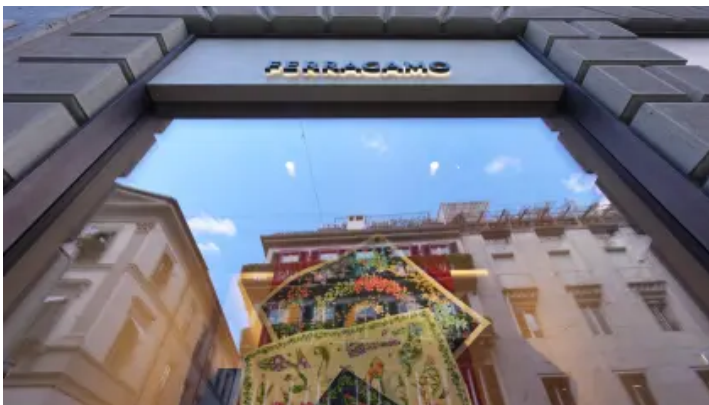
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