



Alma Community Art Center has not gone into hibernation because of the cold, snow and freezing rain but has a slate of upcoming classes to offer to budding artists or even those who just have a touch of cabin fever. Renovations also continue by a dedicated group of volunteers at our new permanent home at 318 Woodworth Street to make the new Alma Community Art Center a working reality that will provide the community with a place to learn and enjoy the visual arts. Until then, we are still located at 107 E. Superior Street and our doors are open Wednesday through Saturday at 11:00 a.m. During the month of February classes offered to youth will be Kumikimo Braiding, Painting with Acrylics, and the very popular After School Art Program which is offered two days each week. Class offerings for sixteen and older will be Pyrography, Water Color, and Batik on rice paper. For more detailed information on classes and workshops and the hours that we will be open, go to our updated and easy to use website at www.alma-cac.org or call 463-8366.

Our current exhibition that is on display in the Wassenaar Art Gallery is entitled "Art for Autism." It is a project designed to increase awareness of both art and autism among the residents of Gratiot County. Autism is a developmental disorder that appears in the first 3 years of life, and affects the brain's normal development of social and communication skills. This project involved two "Paint-Ins" where youth with autism, aided by their "typical" peers as well as youth leaders in the community, worked together to create 76 artistic masterpieces. From the artwork developed, products were designed and printed using the artwork and made available for sale. The profits from these sales then purchase I-Pads to help children with autism that are experiencing severe communication difficulties utilize technology to communicate. The goal of the "Art for Autism" project is not only the tangible outcomes of artwork products and the profit made from selling these products, but the more intangible realization that youth with autism can contribute to the community that they live in. In this case, it is the creation of art. There are cards, calendars, and notepads that are for sale which incorporate all of the art work that has been created and that are on display. This project is co-sponsored by "Everyone Together Gratiot" and "Gratiot County Autism Fueled" and is supported by a grant through the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. ...*"Not being able to speak is not the same as having nothing to say"...*

March will bring a new exhibit to the Wassenaar Gallery, along with some excitement for Gratiot County Youth. Youth Art Month is an annual national observance every March that emphasizes the value of art education for all youth and encourages support for quality school art programs. It has been shown that the visual arts curriculum addresses and develops ways of thinking, questioning, expression, and learning that complement learning in other core subjects. Our Alma Community Art Center is proud to host for a second year a county-wide exhibition of youth artwork from our area schools. Make your calendars to come next month to see our young artists' best work on display!

