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There and Back Again: Local Artist Exhibits Work
Red Raven Art Company features Jonathan Whitlock

Lancaster, PA (June 10, 2010) – At 29-years old Jonathan Whitlock has experienced many changes throughout his life. Eleven years ago, a car accident claimed several of Jonathan’s physical and cognitive abilities. One thing the creatively gifted young man did not lose was his enthusiasm and talent for art.

On Friday, July 2, Whitlock will debut his first gallery exhibit since his 1999 accident at Downtown Lancaster’s Red Raven Art Company. The gallery’s “Emerging Artist” for July will display a progression of oil and acrylic pieces created before and in the years since his accident. The exhibit, which runs through July 31, will feature Whitlock’s early cubist and abstract paintings through his current-day portrait work.

At age 15, Whitlock had a clear vision for his future. He pursued a self-teaching program as an alternative to high school, studying the great painters and teaching himself to paint with oils and sketch with pastels. He went on to study studio arts at Southern Virginia College, during which time he exhibited his works at a Lexington art gallery.

Life changed dramatically and suddenly in 1999, when Whitlock was involved in a serious car

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accident. Whitlock sustained a traumatic brain injury and was in a coma for five months. The accident weakened his left side, impairing his muscle control and balance and necessitating his use of a wheelchair. Formally left-handed, Whitlock learned to use his right hand as his dominant hand. With very little vision in his left eye, he has limited depth perception.

In the years following his accident, Whitlock's desire to learn and improve upon his art remained constant. Five months after emerging from a coma, Whitlock gained the dexterity to pick up a paint brush. While living at Success Rehabilitation in Quakertown, he took an art class at Bucks County Community College. Whitlock describes his artwork in this new beginning as "sloppy at best," but continued on with his pursuit.

"My aspirations as an artist were dramatically altered. Before the accident, I embraced cubism, deconstructing images of my subjects," Whitlock commented. "After the accident, I used art to reconnect my mind and emotions in an effort to regain my abilities."

Returning home to Lancaster, Whitlock enrolled in private lessons from an art instructor at Acadia, a local rehabilitation program. His instructor, Terry Kehrer reintroduced Whitlock to the Lancaster County Art Association. There, Jonathan regained his enthusiasm for cartooning and his desire to doodle and sketch, a practice he uses for developing ideas.

Today, Whitlock continues to work diligently toward his goal of being a professional artist. He attends a monthly class at LCAA for people with disabilities and regularly paints and sketches at home. Whitlock is enrolled in the art class at United Disabilities Services' Adult Enrichment program, a program for mentally alert adults with physical and cognitive disabilities. There, his mother Annette serves as a program aide, leading a variety of activities, from producing musicals to teaching history and cooking.

"I look at this exhibit as a celebration of how far Jonathan has come in the last 11 years. There have been so many amazing people who've helped him get to where he is" commented Whitlock's mother, Annette. "It's a miracle that he's painting."

Several of Whitlock's artwork will be available for sale at Red Raven Art Company through July 31. To view his artwork, visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/jonathan.peter.art/JonSArt#>.

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About UDS

Headquartered in Lancaster, United Disabilities Services (UDS) entities are not-for-profit corporations providing home- and community-based services for individuals with disabilities and the elderly. Incorporated in 1970, UDS is a Certified Medical Assistance Provider and has evolved from a small organization to a \$24-million company providing a network of 12 different programs that advance the independence of individuals residing in a 33-county region. UDS coordinates a network of business partners and satellite offices in multiple counties, has been named one of Central PA's most innovative organizations and is a 2009 Ethics in Business Award recipient from the Samaritan Counseling Center. For more information, visit our website at www.udservices.org.