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Art for Autism

Annual event benefits local autism program

By Sylvia Petty, Special to My Life

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The Mississippi RiverKings and the DeSoto Arts Council recently teamed up to support local autism initiatives in the second annual RiverKings' Art for Autism event. A reception was held March 19 at the DeSoto Civic Center in Southaven.

The reception was the culmination of a month-long auction of original paintings of RiverKings players by local artist and DeSoto Arts Council member Lin Workman.

Hockey fans and art enthusiasts were able to bid on the paintings at RiverKings home games Feb. 13-March 19.

Proceeds from the auction and reception will benefit "Assists for Autism," the non-profit brainchild of RiverKings assistant captain Louis Dumont and community advocate and business owner Wayne Bartley.

RiverKings forward Matt Summers is the 2010-2011 "Assists for Autism" spokesman. Summers' younger cousin has autism and he is excited to help other kids and their families through this cause.

"Because she and I are so close, autism awareness is something I really care about," Summers said.

Through "Assists for Autism," fans were able to pledge an amount of their choosing per assist (a pass made before a goal is scored) made by the team; or make a one-time donation, to help raise awareness about autism.

This event was inspired by the DeSoto Arts Council's Art for Autism camp, made possible by Lakeside Behavioral Health System in conjunction with the Dockery Foundation.

Art for Autism allows approximately 40 local kids with autism the opportunity to creatively express themselves through different art mediums.

Select pieces of art by students at this year's camp were also on display at the reception and on the concourse during the March 19 game.

Sylvia Petty is the community development assistant for the Mississippi RiverKings.