

Local artist donates painting of Air Force flyover to Mount St. Mary's



Local artist Arthur Jones donated a one-of-a-kind oil painting of the Air Force flyover to Mount St. Mary's Hospital. Jones, who has been painting since 1955, watched the flyover with his wife in Mount St. Mary's parking lot. A couple of months later, he called the hospital and said he created and wanted to donate a painting commemorating the special day.

"We are so moved by Arthur's generous and thoughtful donation of this painting," said CJ Urlaub, Mount St. Mary's Hospital president and Catholic Health senior vice president of strategic partnerships, integration and care delivery-Niagara County. "The Air Force flyover was one of those special moments that joined so many of us together during this pandemic, both as health care workers on the frontline and as a community; and Arthur captured it beautifully."

On May 12, a KC-135 from the 914th Air Refueling Wing's 328th Air Refueling Squadron at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and F-35s from the Vermont National Guard flew over Western New York hospitals to honor frontline health care workers. Jones' painting depicts the aircraft, as well as the American flag and blue heart formed by Mount St. Mary's caregivers as their way of saying "Thank you" to the Air Force.

Jones' family accompanied him for the donation to the hospital. Pictured: Jones; his family; his painting; Urlaub; and Julie Berrigan, Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation executive director.



Olick, Senior Center staff busy with COVID-19 safeguards

Continued from Page 1
social distancing protocols and Niagara County Health Department requirements. Olick said that's meant to ensure a safe, happy and healthy experience for the more than 100 area seniors, age 60 to 95 from throughout the River Region who frequent the facility on a weekly basis.

"We were hoping to have the nutrition program start up on Sept. 1," she said, noting the continued shutdown and the center staff's strong focus on health and safety. "We're going to try to gradually phase things back; we're not even sure what it is going to look like, what programs we're going to be able to have."

"Carol, Patty and I, and the van drivers, too, we've been going through and making sure every surface is cleared off, so that everything can be disinfected a couple times a day. Really, it's all about that. We don't think that (things like) card playing is going to happen (just yet). ... We're just trying to work through this."

"We kind of want to start with, maybe like the Senior Club, and what we can do with bingo. Some of the groups are anxious to come back, but the issue is the social distancing."

Suggesting it was sort of a "feel your way around" situation, Olick said. "We've been looking for the guidelines, and the county's (help). ... What we have here now ... it's our understanding how they would have it. The tables are (at) 50% capacity, so what we're hearing ... it would be something like four people at the long table."

What about the protocols to visit and for lunch services?

"My understanding is that we would have people go through the typical questionnaire (for COVID-19), have your temperature

taken, and then have people sign in, and disinfect all surfaces as we go. So we were discussing having a table in the entryway (for that purpose)," Olick said.

Long-term staffer Carol Jacobs, who assisted in running the center during its down time, commented, "We are still providing van service to our seniors, for medical, for going to the grocery store if they need to, or the bank, post office, that type of thing."

Jacobs said she envisions those services to continue for Lewiston seniors as well as those in the Porter-Youngstown, Sanborn and Wheatfield communities.

"I think we're going to remain that way," she said. "It has always been; we have people that come, even from Niagara Falls down here to participate in the programs here. We've always had the Youngstown van that has brought people here for our programs ... exercise class, that type of thing."

"For some reason, we see some Sanborn people, but not all of them. A lot of them come down to play cards, and a lot of them also come on certain days, for a meal, that type of thing. But we've always been encompassing for the little towns and villages around us. ... We like that they come here."

Olick and Jacobs said they are hopeful for a return of the many

offerings that have become popular at the center.

"The Larks are a singing group, they're here every Wednesday; we have a group that plays mah-jong on Monday; Tuesday is always senior club day. Wednesday was bingo day and we also had a group that would come and play bridge; Thursdays was always the euchre club, and one a month the travel club would meet on a Thursday," Jacobs said. "We're hoping (for their return), with some type of social distancing in place."

"We're hoping we're going to have everybody just to be glad to get back for the socialization and that they'll comply with all the requirements. I think that everybody, at this point, will be used to it; but I hope anyway," Olick said.

Both admit area seniors have become frustrated throughout the entire closure process.

"It's so sad, frustrating. Especially the ones that live alone; they're so scared to go out. A lot of them have my cell number and they will call me. They need to talk, hear another voice," Jacobs said. "We've been receiving a lot of calls, just to get back. A number of them can't drive; they rely on this."

Olick said the Niagara County Nutrition Program is scheduled to return Aug. 10, but that Lewis-

ton's program would resume Sept. 1 with the center's reopening.

"They're not happy about it," Olick said when asked of the feedback. "They're upset because we opted to wait. The county nutrition program is stating up on the 10th of August. We opted to wait and see just how that was going to play out, with the setup, etc."

Olick stressed the center's focus has been providing a safe environment for a return of food services.

"I kind of wanted to see how that is going to go, especially being not all that familiar with our seniors. I started on July 1, but our staff, the van drivers, we have talked about it. We consulted and said, 'Let's wait and see how the county does with it,' and we're hoping to open Sept. 1," Olick said.

She noted Lewiston seniors are welcome to utilize the county Nutrition Program that will be operat-

ing this month at its two service locations in Niagara Falls (The John Duke Center or the LaSalle Nutrition Program). To inquire, contact Mindy Doran, nutrition services coordinator, at 438-4031.

As far as a return to social activities, Olick said she is hopeful for a return to normalcy as the days go on.

"We can start with the Lewiston Senior Club, some other activities, and just kind of gradually take baby steps getting things back open. Hopefully, it will go without any issue along the way," she said.

"We're anxious for everybody to come back - can't wait for them to be able to come back. We wish it could be sooner, but we want everybody to be safe."

For updates on the Senior Center, she invites residents to contact her at 754-2071.

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