



# *Art* in the name of **FUNDRAISING**

Winnetka epilepsy awareness foundation Henry's Heroes raises money to support epilepsy charities and research, Page 17



## I &amp; A COVER STORY

# Making art for a good cause

Local community joins Winnetka family in fight against epilepsy

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After participating in an industrious art workshop in August at the North Shore Art League's donated studio space inside the Winnetka Community House, a group of philanthropic fifth and sixth graders from the Winnetka-based and youth-led epilepsy research charity Henry's Heroes sold their masterpieces to friends and family at an outdoor fundraiser at Hubbard Woods Park on Sept. 30.

From 5-7 p.m., approximately 30 children and their families turned out to enjoy the art fair, which raised over \$1,600 to go towards nationwide epilepsy research causes. Canvas oil paintings, porcelain birds and Japanese-style scrolls ranging in price from \$20-\$30 were among the many art works featured for sale. Two collaborative works of art, including a large oil painting and 3-D paper collage were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

As parents admired and purchased their children's art, the enthusiastic amateur artists sold raffle tickets, hot dogs and popcorn donated by Lakeside Foods. Throughout the fundraiser, Chris Rider, a seventh grader at Carleton Washburne School, kept the music flowing as the event's DJ. Other kids happily climbed on equipment in the new Hubbard Woods playground or organized games on the park lawn.



Nancy Iida (left) and Holly Hales discuss a work of art for sale at the Henry's Heroes art fair at Hubbard Woods Park on Sept. 30.

Holly Hales, whose three children all created art for the fundraiser, proudly purchased several of their creations.

"It's for a great cause," she said. "Plus, I'm always a sucker for my kids' artwork."

Henry's Heroes was founded by Nancy and Tim Iida in 2013 after a rally of community support for their son Henry — now 12 — was diagnosed with epilepsy at age 5 and suffered a severe grand mal seizure in third grade at Greeley School. The outpouring of support the Iida's received from Henry's friends inspired them to found a charity that would help Henry and his classmates find proactive ways to fight the disease. In just three years, Henry's Heroes has raised nearly \$25,000 through local, student-led fundraisers.

"Tonight's art fair is a perfect example of how these kids have proven themselves so effective," Nancy Iida said. "It was their idea, brought to fruition with my help."

Nancy estimates there are 45 active Heroes youth volunteers who participate in three to four fundraisers a year, but only six Heroes

"ambassadors" have full responsibility for generating new ideas for events, attending regular organizational meetings and staffing each fundraiser.

The Heroes' charitable art fair concept was the brainchild of ambassador Wyatt McAlexander, a sixth grader at Skokie School who recently moved to Winnetka from San Antonio, Texas.

"I thought we could do an art fundraiser but also bring in a DJ to make it fun," he said. "Then, we had the idea to make our own art, which is how it all came together."

Henry's Heroes hopes to generate \$10,000 in 2016 through new events and its annual sidewalk sale and car wash. Proceeds raised are donated to The Epilepsy Foundation and Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy (CURE) as well as Evanston-based epilepsy charity Danny Did Foundation, which works nationally to raise awareness around the risk of sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP). The Danny Did Foundation also provides grants to families of children with epilepsy who can't afford sleep monitors.