

The Human – Animal Bond and the talented young artist “Giizhik”

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I first learned about the talented young artist “Giizhik” when I moved to Hayward from St Charles, IL in October of 2018. I was picking up some groceries at Market Place Foods and as I was leaving the store I was drawn to a table set up with artistic, colorful note cards for sale. That is when I met Pam Miller, Giizhik’s mother. She told me all about Giizhik who had been diagnosed with autism at age five. “It was then we discovered his love for paper, pens and drawing.” Today he is a young man of 18 years. “It is through his artwork that we remember to revel in the smallest of joys and search for the hidden treasures in every child.” Of course I purchased 20 of his cards right on the spot. There were several “animal themed” cards that I had purchased. Pam and I discussed the power of the human-animal bond and the impact that his fascination with animals has had on Giizhik’s artwork. I immediately thought about my organization **OCSA (Ovarian Cancer Symptom Awareness)** and how we emphasize the human-animal bond as we seek to educate women, men and their families about the importance of the early detection of ovarian cancer and very importantly **any** kind of disease. My Afghan hound, Sharrah’s Ch Khalin had been certified as a therapy dog and accompanied me to many health fairs where people would stop by my information booth to say hello to me but only so they could pet my beautiful dog. That simple interaction allowed me to share OCSA information.

Fast forward to June 2019 – my new friend Deanna Persson introduced me to Sara Balbin, an artist and art therapist and co-founder of **SeeMyArt, Inc. SMART** - it is a not for profit that was established in 2012 that “seeks to open doors and unlock minds by providing public venues on land and online for displaying art by individuals with all disabilities, and by educating the public about the health benefits of artistic expression.” Pam Miller and her son Giizhik work very closely with SMART and Giizhik is one of Sara’s students. The more I learned about SMART and especially Giizhik’s art work I knew that I wanted him to create a painting of my two adopted Afghan hounds, Ch Ahkie and GCH Kristah, the niece and nephew of my beloved Ch Khalin. In November of 2019 I attended a “**SMART**” general meeting and expressed my interest in commissioning Giizhik to paint Ahkie and Kristah on behalf of **OCSA** to facilitate our awareness messaging here in the Northwoods of Wisconsin.

Now fast forward to September 2020...**OCSA** took possession of the “Ahkie and Kristah” painting that will be donated to the “Art for Animals” On-line Fundraiser benefiting the **Northwoods Humane Society!**

The moral of the story...three charities happily worked together to enhance the human-animal bond! The American Veterinary Medical Association states that “The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, animals, and the environment.”

Dates to Save:

- Sept. 29-Oct. 6: Art For Animals On-line at www.Kubarekauction.com
- Oct. 8 and 10: Pick up auction items at the NHS Shelter, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Nov. 1: End of this year’s shoe drive