

Art history lessons pay off for charity

Goddard School auctions off work of its budding artists

BY ALESHA WILLIAMS BOYD • FREEHOLD BUREAU • APRIL 30, 2008



MANALAPAN — At 5 years old, Connor Jackson already knows Leonardo DaVinci “made a picture of that lady” — known in other circles as the Mona Lisa.

Viola Smith, also 5, is familiar with Vincent Van Gogh’s love of sunflowers, depicted in his famous series of sunflower paintings. And Connor and Viola’s colleagues in the Roller Coaster class at The Goddard School all have tried their hand at pointillism, a style inspired by Neo-Impressionist painter Georges-Pierre Seurat.

It’s pretty advanced stuff for students who have only been out of diapers a few years, joked Goddard parent Chantal Esteves.

“I’m a big fan of art, so when I saw the Jackson Pollock and all the stuff they did, I was really impressed,” said Esteves, 30, whose 4-month-old

son, Vicente, helped create an Arshile Gorky-inspired abstract piece.

“Sometimes you don’t see them teaching (art and art history) until you’re in college. It’s good for them to learn it at an early age.”

Children from 6 weeks to 6 years old have been learning about the great masters this month at the Wilson Avenue school. They also created artwork inspired by their studies that was to be auctioned off through April, school staff said.

At the school’s entrance, parents are greeted by a depiction of Van Gogh’s “Starry Night,” made by 3-year-olds with shades of blue paint and star-shaped cookie cutters.

A class of 2- and 3-year-olds recreated Sandro Botticelli’s “Primavera” with chocolate baking liners and foam stickers doubling as spring flowers. Teachers helped guide their 6-week-old to 1-year-olds’ brushes to create the Styrofoam-accented, Gorky-style abstract.

Parents loved the display so much they began to accept bids for the work, teacher Christine Aiello said. Within two days they had 10 to 15 bids, she said.

Proceeds will benefit the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation, she said. The organization distributes aid for school, medical treatment and more to children of Marines or federal law enforcement personnel killed on duty or while serving their country, according to its Web site.

“I think it’s a great cause for all the troops for everything they do for us in America,” Aiello said. “I think it’s great to give back and I think our families feel the same.”

Because the children are so young, they don’t likely understand the cause they’re supporting, owner Joe Spinosi said.

But infants’ teacher Nanette Prusakowski said the children weren’t just doing work that they won’t understand for years. They’re developing valuable skills that will last a lifetime, Prusakowski said.

“They learned motor skills, developed cognitive skills and sensory with all the textures, and even (worked on) language, because we were teaching the colors as we put them on,” Prusakowski said with a smile. “Hopefully they won’t paint on the walls when they get older.”