

Good morning, Representative Nelson and members of the House Appropriations Committee. My name is Nancy Farnham and I am here to encourage you to support the work of the ND Council on the Arts. The Enderlin Fine Arts Association and Maryhill Manor, a 46-bed skilled nursing facility, became involved in The Council's Art for Life program in 2011. I was the Administrator at Maryhill Manor at that time and continue to work with this program as a committee member, volunteer, and artist since my retirement.

Here are just a few recent examples of how the Art for Life program has enhanced the lives of the residents at Maryhill Manor and our community.

One project helped residents write their own poem about where they are from and events that helped shape their lives. Volunteers asked residents questions developed by a poet to bring out memories. The poet then helped format their poems. One woman who participated in the poetry writing was so excited and said, "I haven't thought about that for years!" The poetry project helped to preserve the participants' identity and created treasures that will pass along information from generation to generation. Art tells our stories in beautiful and powerful ways!

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Maryhill Manor went into lock down and visitors were restricted from coming into the building. At that time when residents faced loneliness and isolation, the power of art was needed more than ever but how were we going to accomplish anything without coming into the building? It didn't take long for the creativity of The Council to kick into high gear and begin sending out ideas and suggestions to our group and other participants. One idea was to have ND troubadour Chuck Suchy interview residents virtually and write a song based on those interviews. The song Chuck wrote after his Maryhill visit was titled "Listen to the Wise." Wow! Just the name alone tells those residents they are valued and the beautiful, melodic ballad weaves together their words of wisdom in a way that is bound to touch all who hear it. Chuck Suchy is one example of many of the quality artists that we have been able to bring to the residents at Maryhill because of the ND Council on the Arts. Without them, this would not have happened.

During lock down, residents look out their room windows a lot, so we arranged for artists to paint their windows with something personalized for them to bring a smile. One resident came back to her room to find a llama painted on her window. She was delighted and said that she didn't realize the staff knew she liked llamas! Art has the power to lift up and unite!

A group of 22 singers came to Maryhill the week of Christmas and slowly made their way around the entire outside of the building, stopping at each window to sing carols and greet the residents. Art has the power to bring joy and connect us!

There is not time to tell you about all that has happened as a result of our Art for Life program, but I hope these examples show you that it is worth investing in. The ND Council on the Arts is doing a tremendous job of bringing art to our seniors and our community and making a difference in the lives of many. Your support is appreciated!

Sincerely,

**Nancy Farnham**

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