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ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS: Art As Therapy for Autistic Youth Exhibit and Workshop

March 15, 2010-Athens-The McMinn County Living Heritage Museum in Athens, Tennessee is pleased to announce that they are hosting Artistic Expressions: Art as Therapy April 2 through April 30, 2010. The exhibit will include artwork by rising artist Derrick Freeman who was diagnosed with autism when he was two years old. Unable to learn and use language like most children he learned to express his perceptions of life and everyday living through his drawings and artwork. Derrick's art sings with splashes of color, confident strokes and compositions that evoke a wide range of emotions. Today, 18 year old Derrick is a talented and prolific artist. Come and meet the artists April 5 at 7pm as the Museum co-hosts with the Autism support Group of McMinn County an opening reception for Derrick.

As part of this exhibit the Museum is offering a workshop at the Museum for kids on March 27, 2010. Using art as therapy to address the symptoms of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) participants will create scenes with various colorful and textured fabrics that will be painted and decorated as well. The artwork will then be on display at the Living Heritage Museum throughout the month of April. Not only will the programming allow those who have been diagnosed to explore art as therapy, but individuals who have not had exposure to this disability will have a better understanding of the condition through Derrick's artwork.

The workshop will take place Saturday, March 27, 2010 and is free but space is limited so call today! Ages 7 & under 10am-12pm, ages 8 & up 1pm-3pm. Call 423-745-0329 to register. One parent/guardian must accompany each child. The workshop will be lead by Yvette Parrish, Executive Director at Full Circle as well as a mentor at Full Circle Art. She has also worked with the Frist Center and the Tennessee Arts Commission to create art programs for individuals with various disabilities

While the Living Heritage Museum is dedicated to being an environment that is welcoming to everyone, most cultural institutions are not equipped to be enjoyed by those in the autism community. Many with autism are passionate learners but have a tough time with abstract thinking, sensory overloads, transitions, and social communications. That's why many parents of even mildly autistic children find it difficult to bring their children to museums, where everything is new, every gallery is different, and every social interaction is a potential ordeal. The Living Heritage Museum is looking to bridge that gap and introduce the Museum to a new audience.

The Living Heritage Museum was the recipient of a \$1,560 grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission to help sponsor "Artistic Expressions: Art As Therapy." ABC is a grant program funded by the Tennessee General Assembly and administered by Southeast Tennessee Development District in cooperation with the Tennessee Arts Commission.

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