

Written by

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People Incorporated Mental Health Services is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, but there's a second reason to celebrate in 2009—Artability is marking its 15th year!

The Artability Art Show, which celebrates the creativity and contributions of people with mental illness, got its start at APOLLO, one of People Incorporated's two drop-in centers, then located in the old St. Paul Academy building on Dale Street. In its early years it was a private show for members of APOLLO, but it was opened to the public in 1999 and has never looked back. The show now features the art and writing of some 90 artists from around the metro area and beyond, and draws over 500 visitors over three days. Even better, the artists are able to sell their work and receive 90% of the profits (the remaining 10% goes back into the Artability program).

The winner of this year's poster contest, Gail Harbeck, is an Artability veteran, having shown her work—and won several awards—over the last five years. “It's always a joy for me to have my work recognized, and the opening night is such a great get-together. It's wonderful to be able to show with my peers, too. Artability is such a supportive place to show your work, especially when you're an emerging artist. There are so many talented people who just don't get the recognition they deserve—and the show gives artists with mental illness the chance to show the world what we can do. It's fantastic.”

Like a number of artists who begin exhibiting at Artability, the show has spurred her to work as a serious artist. “It helped me to see that it could be an option for me. I started participating in other shows, and now I spend about four hours a day painting or drawing.” This year Gail has shown her work in Rochester, New York, and in New York City. Gail is also an accomplished writer, and contributes to Artability's writing anthology—and her artwork and writing were featured in People Incorporated's 40th anniversary annual report.

Gail has been working with a mentor this past year, which has led her to take more risks with her art, including working in a more abstract style. Her winning poster piece, *Kinetic Zip*, is an exuberant mixture of bright colors and bold lines that fits perfectly with this year's celebratory theme. “It's good to work outside my comfort zone—exciting things happen. Right now I'm

Jazzed! People Incorporated's Artability Art Show celebrates 15 years - October 1-3

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combining abstract and representational styles into my art. That's why I love going to Artability. There are so many styles and perspectives—it's inspiring to see what others are doing. I can't wait to see this year's show!"

People Incorporated, a nonprofit founded in 1969, operates 41 programs throughout the Twin Cities, helping people with mental illness to live independently in the community.

People Incorporated's Artability Art Show: October 1-3, 2009, at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (Dale and Hwy 94). Opening reception 10/1 at 7:00 PM. Viewing times are 10/1, 6:00-9:00 PM; 10/2, 2:00-8:00 PM; and 10/3, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. For more information call 651-227-6321 ex. 42. www.PeopleIncorporated.org