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SOME OF THE REGION'S MOST RESPECTED ARTISTS COME TOGETHER FOR AN ONLINE ART AUCTION TO BENEFIT LEGAL AID, A PRO BONO LAW FIRM IN COLLIER COUNTY.

On paper, it can be hard to grasp the magnitude of Legal Aid's impact. You can understand they provide free legal counsel to the needy; that they handle issues from immigration to family court to housing. But this doesn't convey how a 90-year-old vet may

face homelessness after his wife passes and he misses some tax payments; how a woman may not know she has the right to report an abusive spouse. Or how a family's life may be turned upside down by a technicality that prevents a 7-year-old with half a heart from getting the

care she needs. "We see cases like this day in and day out," says Jeff Ahren, director of development for Legal Aid. "But our organization is not often in the spotlight; we can't share a lot of the stories, because the cases are in litigation or for the safety of the person."

Spearheaded by Catholic nun and attorney Sister Maureen Kelleher, Legal Aid is a beacon of hope for thousands of people in Collier County. Retired educator Laura Barnard started Art Aid as a benefit for the cause last year. Already, the event has become the orga-

nization's most successful fundraiser, raising more than \$50,000 between the online auction and a Quick Draw event in November when artists painted live at the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club. This month, over the course of eight days, supporters bid on pieces by

artists like Clyde Butcher, Phil Fisher and Paul Arsenault. This is the first time so many prolific artists in the region unite in one auction and for one cause. Here, we introduce you to six of the pieces you can acquire during the online auction Feb. 8-16.

“WE ARE YOUNG - FUN. II”

BY TAMMRA SIGLER



Naples Art District-based artist Tammra Sigler often paints while listening to music. In creating this piece, she was streaming the 2011 hit song “We Are Young” by the pop-rock band Fun. The song’s anthemic chorus says, “Let’s set the world on fire; we can burn brighter than the sun.” Similarly, Sigler believes grassroots movements can spark big change, and events such as Art Aid are the ignition. She became involved with the auction to be part of a “movement to help people who can’t connect with a power player.” As she painted, she kept the upbeat song on a loop, allowing its essence to saturate the piece with a cheerful, fantastical energy. The canvas includes markings made by permanent markers, a medium that Sigler says lends a street-art attitude. The prevailing themes are joy, playfulness and optimism. “It has a feeling of flight and fantasy,” she says. And those are things we can all get behind.



“THE WANDERER MONARCH”  
BY CESAR AGUILERA

For Cesar Aguilera, the curator at the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, his auction piece started by studying the monarch butterfly's journey in the fall from the northeastern U.S. and Canada to warmer climates in Mexico. The winged creatures embark on a mass migration that spans 3,000 miles—a phenomenon the contemporary artist relates to human migration. The Ecuadorian-born artist captures all this in his oil and spray paint piece. “As the monarch butterflies travel, they pollinate the fields, and help make life possible on their journey,” he says. “The Wanderer Monarch” looks at how their unrestricted movement allows for life and beauty to bloom along the way. “Sometimes the problem may appear broad, but the solution can be so simple,” he says.





## “ I WISH I WAS A BIRD ”

BY JUAN DIAZ

Even in his childhood, Juan Diaz was aware of how much need exists in the world: “There’s enough to go around, but still there are so many people who are struggling.” That disparity became the basis of his contemporary works over the past 15 years. Diaz’s pieces, like those found in his well-known “Multicolor” series, with portraits of people painted with faces in various primary colors speak to humanity. “In painting, to create any skin tone, you use the same primary colors,” he explains. Flesh tones are accomplished by mixing different ratios of red, blue, yellow and white. To the artist, it’s a metaphor for humankind: “Instead of dividing ourselves into skin colors, we need to see we are the same.” His ethos dovetails with Legal Aid’s bottom line, which relies on seeing the individual and providing equal opportunities for access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Diaz’s auction piece, “I Wish I Was a Bird,” depicts a young girl looking out to a white bird, her eyes full of hope. He believes by working together and reaching out a hand to help each other, “We still have a chance—we can make things work.”





## “ SPRING GRASSES ”

BY ANNA RAC

Anna Rac immigrated to the U.S. as a 16-year-old in 1966, after communism overtook her native Poland. While studying music at the University of Illinois, she became involved in political activism. She mailed uncensored books to countries in the Soviet Union block, and even wrote to her university's administration, asking to remove books from its shelves that presented the USSR's demonized view of the West. She's most inspired by the work Legal Aid does to help families facing immigration issues. "I see the other side," Rac says. "I've seen the struggle, the injustice, the effort of people who are trying so hard to be safe." For this year's auction, Rac, who is a trained pianist and explores the connection between art and classical music, created this mixed-media piece with acrylics, pencils, charcoal, markers, crayons and oil pigments. "There's direction, motif, rhythm and vibrancy—a harmony in the dynamic movement," she says.





“ SUNSET REFLECTIONS  
ON THE GULF ”  
BY PAUL ARSENAULT

Ask Paul Arsenault about his relationship with the Naples Pier, and he'll say the answer is complicated. An admittedly rebellious young artist when he arrived in Naples in 1974, he refused to paint the landmark for the first 15 years of his career because it "was too easy and predictable." Then something clicked for the artistic storyteller, who is considered the dean of the local art scene. "Though it could be construed as a contrite image, I discovered a certain bottom line to the pier: It's not what you paint, it's how you paint it," Arsenault says. "The lifeline of the beach to the community was the pier, which through history drew people to this area. It's important to capture its story and importance." Now, Arsenault has painted the pier dozens of times, including for this year's auction. Inspired by the recent Time magazine cover that showed teenage environmental activist Greta Thunberg looking out to the ocean, Arsenault captured the pier as a symbol of hope. "Sunset at the pier is a destination in and of itself," he says. "So it makes sense to capture it as a symbol not only of the city, but also how it's welcomed so many people over its storied history."

## “SINK OR SWIM”

BY HOLLY MANNECK

Pop artist Holly Manneck embeds powerful messages into a sea of whimsy in her technicolor works. Raised in a small town in Vermont, Manneck says her overseas travels and residencies opened her eyes to the world. “Seeing so many cultures, I discovered that we’re really not that different,” she says. The notion inspired her Art Aid piece. The vibrant mixed-media work, which incorporates acrylic paint and digital photography on a birch panel, features a bikini-clad girl standing over a body of water holding a lifesaver. “The girl wants to move forward, and she is either going to sink or swim,” she says. To Manneck, the piece reflects the thousands of individuals who go to Legal Aid looking to make a better life for themselves and their families. “It’s all about giving people hope,” she says. 

