

ART

## Program means self-expression, income for people with disabilities



2 HOURS AGO • PAUL SWIECH  
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**NORMAL** — The art is a silhouette of a man in a hat with colors dripping down toward him.

To artist Larry Brightwell, the work is a colorful representation of actor and producer Bradley Cooper.

"I like Bradley Cooper," Brightwell said.

But to Becky Brennan, director of developmental training at Marcfirst, the art

represents self-expression and income generation for a segment of the community that finds communication and employment difficult.

Brightwell, 25, is among 42 people with intellectual and development disabilities involved in Marcfirst's growing Marc Making program. The program is an opportunity for Marcfirst participants to create, reproduce and sell art.

Since the program began several months ago, Marc artists have sold works for a total of \$1,320, said Stephanie Adomaitis, an artist who also is Marcfirst vice president of development and marketing.

Art will be sold during Daybreak Rotary Club's Cajun Craze fundraiser from 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday at Lakeside Country Club, 1201 Croxton Ave., Bloomington.

"It's been good for Larry," Brennan said of Marc Making.

Brightwell, who has Down syndrome and a moderate intellectual disability, is a Lexington native who lives in a Marcfirst group home in Normal and is part of the agency's development training program. Before joining the program, he spent most of his time watching movies, Brennan said.

"Art has been a fun way for him to express himself," Brennan said. "He is actively looking for work but, for now, the artwork is a way for him to get extra funds."

"Art is awesome," Brightwell said.

How does he feel when he creates art? "I feel happy," he responded.

Brightwell has sold several pieces. "It was very awesome. I used the money to buy Bradley

Cooper movies."

"There has been a huge response of people wanting to get involved with this," said Adomaitis, citing financial support from Daybreak Rotary and Illinois Prairie Community Foundation. That money is going to buy art supplies and to cover field trips for Marc artists and for stipends for local artists who wish to teach Marc artists.

Dave Scott of Daybreak Rotary said, "When you see them (Marc artists) light up because they created and sold art, that says it all right there."

"This program," Adomaitis said, "is a win-win for the artists who we support and the community."

## **Rotary fundraiser**

**What:** Cajun Craze, a fundraiser for Daybreak Rotary Club

**When:** 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Lakeside Country Club, 1201 N. Croxton Ave., Bloomington

**Details:** Cajun food, drinks, live music, prizes, silent auction and art sold by Marcfirst artists

**Tickets:** \$25. Order at [www.daybreakrotary.org](http://www.daybreakrotary.org) or come to the event.

**Why:** To support the Marc Making program and other Daybreak Rotary-supported organizations, including Habitat for Humanity of McLean County.

*Sources: Dave Scott, Stephanie Adomaitis*