

they can express themselves.

“It shows what a mind can do,” Cheryl Ehlers, art director and exhibit coordinator, said. “Art is an avenue of communication.”



Art director Cheryl Ehlers in front of artwork by TERI developmentally challenged students. Photo by Promise Yee

Among the 65 works on display were an animated 400-pound wood lion, riveted metal hearts, and a variety of paintings.

“We’re trying to promote awareness,” Ehlers said. “Art is a way of pulling joy out of us. Putting a smile on our face.”

“The biggest focus is for people to become aware of the value of art,” Ehlers added. “What it can do for all walks of life.”

Some notable pieces among the seven works by TERI students were a detailed colored pencil drawing of Mickey Mouse drawn from memory, a bright yellow textile and paint composition, and a sea blue 3-D Mod Podge mobile.

“It moves with time and gravity,” Ehlers said. “There are oceans and people swimming. I can’t get adults to think like that.”

TERI Campus of Life helps children and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities.

“The arts program is an unfunded enrichment activity that we’re constantly trying to keep going,” Phillip Sammuli, development manager of TERI Campus of Life, said. “It’s therapy and a way for students to express themselves. It gives them a voice.”

Sammuli said that students are additionally motivated to create artwork when they know it will be displayed.

“The process of doing artwork and displaying it helps them as a whole to be happy,” Sammuli said. “It helps the whole process of everything else we do. Their disabilities aren’t who they are.”

He added that partnerships with artists, businesses and nonprofit groups have enabled students’ artwork to be shown regularly.

The Off Track Gallery in Encinitas will host a reception for an exhibit of TERI student artwork Aug. 11.