

Success Stories

New Smyrna Beach Woman Brushes with Success

Donna Lynn Iavarone has embarked on a new career that she hopes will serve as an example for other people with developmental disabilities. The talented New Smyrna Beach woman is painting her way into her own business. During October, which is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) is putting the spotlight on Floridians like Iavarone who have careers and fulfilling lives.

Iavarone discovered her passion for oil painting while attending an art workshop at United Cerebral Palsy in Hollywood in the early 1980s. Since then she has painted more than 100 oil paintings while nurturing a dream to become self-employed by using her art to produce greeting cards and personalized artwork.

In 2006, Iavarone informed her supported living coach, Kristina Wall, of her dream, and the two of them started working closely together to turn it into reality.

"Kristina is very proud of Donna Lynn, and has worked diligently alongside her," said Shae Porter, employment liaison in APD's Area 12 office in Daytona Beach. "They have traveled to attend training on starting a small business and are also taking advantage of local resources to make Donna Lynn's dream of mass producing her greeting cards come true."



With Wall's assistance, Iavarone contacted the University of South Florida to get more guidance on self employment. Iavarone is currently working with Vocational Rehabilitation in order to write her business plan and develop a Web page. In November, Iavarone plans to participate in an art show at Bert Fish Medical Center in New Smyrna Beach to display her paintings and promote her new business.

"I named my business Artistically Speaking because, as an artist, I have trouble speaking, but I speak through my artwork," Iavarone said. "I want to be a great example for people with disabilities to have their own businesses."

Iavarone receives services such as supported living through APD. She is an active member in her community and completed a large majority of her artwork at the Schott Community Church.

APD supports people with developmental disabilities to live, learn, and work in their communities. For more information about the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, visit www.apdcares.org or call toll-free **1- 866-APD-CARES (1-866-273-2273)**.

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