

HANOVER AMAZING KIDS CLUB HOLDS ART SHOWCASE

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Four-year-old Eli Wilson never showed any interest in coloring or painting.

That all changed when he joined the Amazing Kids Club.

"Now it's one of his favorite things," his father, Matthew Wilson, said.

The summer program of the Amazing Kids Club wrapped up Thursday with an art show that displayed the creations of children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. The program, from TrueNorth Wellness Services in Hanover, served 226 people for 11 weeks this summer.

The halls of the Hanover facility were decorated with artwork from the kids enrolled in the program throughout the term. From self-portraits to shapes cut out to look like rocket ships, every hallway and room had a different theme to showcase and a unique approach to stimulate the Amazing Kids Club members.

The benefits of making art include development of fine motor manipulation, imaginative skills and communication, among others, according to Bruce Swiger, a clinical coordinator in the program.

"It's not the answer to everything, but it's a piece of the puzzle to work on integration," Swiger said.

The art showcase, the second of its kind, additionally provides an environment for the children to recognize their creations and for staff to engage with families.

"It gives family a chance to meet with staff in a different format," Swiger said. "That helps us form a more open line of communication."

Families moseyed around the hallway, chatting with staff and observing the wide range of art projects, which included pottery and three-dimensional cubes hanging from a classroom ceiling. The specialized projects were determined by the children's ability and level.

Both of Wilson's sons, Eli and Johnny, 5, were enrolled in the program.

"They had a lot of fun this summer," Wilson said.

He has noticed a change in Eli, who now has an outlet at home with an easel with a chalkboard, something Wilson never could have imagined prior to the Amazing Kids Club.

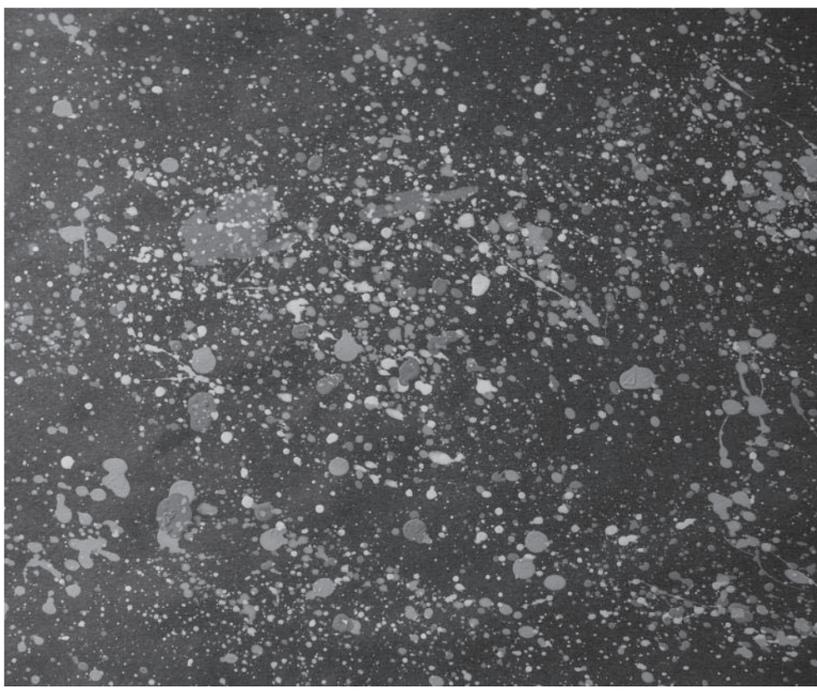
In addition, the program has put Wilson more at ease with sending Johnny off to kindergarten. The classroom structure of the Amazing Kids Club and field trips the program offered made him feel like Johnny will be more prepared, he said.

In its 11th year, the Amazing Kids Club is looking to "be as many things as we can to as many people as we can," Swiger said. That inclusiveness helps the children and adolescents be as successful as they can. TrueNorth Wellness also offers pre-school and after school programs in the Amazing Kids Club.

TrueNorth Wellness announced plans to expand in April, purchasing a 20,000-square-foot facility in April at 1181 West-



PHOTOS BY CLARE BECKER/THE EVENING SUN
Johnny Wilson, 5, is lifted up by his dad, Matthew Wilson to touch the piece of art he created during the summer program at the TrueNorth Wellness Services' Amazing Kids Club in Hanover.



A work by an artist named Matt of the Sea Dragon group is one of the pieces on display at the Amazing Kids Club's Frederick Street location in Hanover.

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Paul Wagner, an intern at TrueNorth Wellness, said his summer really opened his eyes in learning about people on the spectrum.

"Seeing a stubborn kid open up to you is a very cool experience," he said. "Interacting with the kids is absolutely the best part."

Last 10 years 'terrible,' retired Gettysburg cop says

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A former Gettysburg Borough police sergeant connected to a controversial Taser incident last year will continue to receive benefits from the borough as part of the collective bargaining agreement that led to his resignation.

Sgt. Larry Runk signed the resignation agreement Aug. 11, according to a copy that was obtained by The Evening Sun Thursday through a Right-to-Know request. His final day at work was Aug. 12.

Runk, who could not be reached for comment Friday, also sent a letter to Gettysburg Mayor Theodore Streeter the day he signed the agreement.

In the letter, Runk details his discontent with the borough's relationship with the police department.

"Just rest assured that this has been a terrible last 10 years," Runk says.

"It seems that everyone knows more about our jobs than we do, I have never seen a council or Borough so dead set against their own police department than here." The former sergeant had worked for the borough for about 30 years.

Runk also says he feels sorry for the other officers in the department because it has been "demonstrated over and over that no one here supports them."

"It amazes me that a few with two years or so here can ruin a career as badly as you people have," Runk says in the letter.

"It is a shame that the people of Gettysburg get the brunt of the decisions that the few of you make."

Although borough officials have declined to elaborate on Runk's involvement in the Taser incident, his name was brought up in several meetings regarding what happened the night of the May 2015 arrest.

During that arrest, Officer Christopher Folster used a Taser on 28-year-old Derek Twyman as he refused to get out of his car during a traffic stop.

Footage from the incident was captured on Folster's body camera and shown at Twyman's trial.

Twyman was ultimately acquitted of resisting arrest, a success he credits to the evidence captured by the camera.

In addition to Runk's benefits, which he will receive until he reaches retirement age, the borough will pay for Runk's legal defense and any settlements or judgment, with the exception of punitive damages, for actions that took place during his employment at the Gettysburg police department, his resignation agreement states.

Folster's agreement with the borough was similar; however, he received a lump sum payment of \$10,000, and his benefits through the borough will end with the 2016 fiscal year or when he obtains another job.

Runk's personnel file will contain "no reference to the borough's concerns that gave rise to the release agreement nor the independent investigation."

Gettysburg officials have repeatedly sworn to keep an independent investigation into the May 2015 arrest confidential.

The Pennsylvania Office of Open Records ruled Aug. 10 in favor of releasing portions of that investigation to the public. The borough has 30 days to decide whether to appeal the decision.

New Oxford gas leak stopped, residents return after evacuation

STAFF REPORT
THE EVENING SUN

Life in New Oxford quickly went back to normal late Thursday night after crews from Columbia Gas repaired a gas leak that temporarily evacuated homes.

Residents slept in their own beds, albeit later in the evening than maybe was usual, and children returned to school Friday morning as though nothing had happened.

But while the leak was active, residents within a half-mile of the incident had to wait with friends or at the local fire company as crews tried to make the scene safe.

About 30 residents had to evacuate their homes around 7:30 p.m. Thursday after a truck backed into the natural gas line at 3316 Carlisle Pike.

The driver of the truck was an employee of a contractor performing routine maintenance at a Columbia Gas regulator facility. He was uninjured, the gas company said.

There were also no reports of injuries caused by the leak, and an emergency official described the evacuations as just a precaution.

Traffic was closed on Carlisle Pike for several hours, with cars being diverted to Route 30. Power was also shut off in the vicinity.

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency sent emergency alerts to residents within a half-mile of the leak, telling them to vacate the area. Local police officers and one Hamilton Township supervisor also went door-to-door to make sure residents got out.

A shelter-in-place order went out to the Brethren Home at Crosskeys Village,



HARRISON JONES/FOR THE EVENING SUN
Fire engines leave the scene of a gas leak on Thursday in Hamilton Township. Approximately 30 residents were forced to evacuate their homes.

which is a little less than a mile away from where the leak occurred.

People who had to evacuate were directed to a temporary shelter at the United Hook & Ladder Company in New Oxford, and the Red Cross provided meals at the scene.

About 20 people from six families went to the evacuation center run by the Red Cross, said Dan Tobin, a Red Cross spokesman.

"From the best of my knowledge, nobody stayed the night. Everybody was

able to go home, but I don't know what time that was," Tobin said.

Residents were allowed to return to their homes after the leak was repaired around 11:30 p.m., according to the gas company. Roads surrounding the affected area were open Friday morning.

There will be no interruption of gas service for Columbia Gas customers, according to the company.

Conewago Valley schools were not affected by the gas leak, with buses and classes running on a normal schedule.