

Southington exhibition to reward artists with disabilities

Farrah Duffany | Posted: Wednesday, July 24, 2013 8:25 pm

SOUTHINGTON — Three years ago, Carole Milano's older sister, Kathleen Sena, died at 68. Milano often finds herself reminiscing about their younger days, which she was in charge of taking care of Sena after school.

"I would tap dance and sing for her," Milano said, laughing. "If she liked it, she would clap her hands and say, 'Le le le' and if she didn't like it she would throw things at me."

Until Sena was a teen, she stayed home under the care of her family because she could not communicate well. She had Cornelia de Lange syndrome, a genetic disorder present from birth that "causes a range of physical, cognitive and medical challenges," according to the Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation's website.

As her mother made dinner every night before Sena went to Southbury Training School, it was Milano's job to watch and play with Sena. Milano was close to her older sister despite the communication gap.

"I felt that Kathleen influenced my life when I was growing up," Milano said.

To honor her sister's memory, Milano has become the driving force behind an exhibition for artists with disabilities.

Artists from Southington and other towns will have their work displayed on Aug. 9 in a gallery at Paris in Plantsville. Judges will look over the work and cash prizes will be given for first, second, and third place.

Andy Zygmunt, a Southington resident, will be one of the judges. For the past 25 years, he has worked on a variety of art pieces, mostly portraits and illustrations. He uses several media, including pastels and ink. Never having judged before, he is looking forward to the event.

"I think they should give everyone the opportunity to showcase their work," Zygmunt said.

As the president of the Southington Arts Council for 31 years, Milano said she's always wanted to display the work of artists with disabilities but it never came to fruition.

"My whole feeling is a lot of people have conceptions about people if they look different or act different," Milano said. "Growing up like I did, and having someone at home, it just made me a very accepting person and willing to be open and a regular fan of what anyone could do."