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CONTACT: Anne Mc Kenna
(585) 256-3800, ext 231

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BENCH ON PARADE DRAWS OUT THE ARTISTS OF EAST HOUSE

In real life, they are mental health counselors, caseworkers and recreation coordinators. But, their talent as artists cannot be denied. Five employees of East House Corporation came together to create one beautiful “hope “ bench. Working together, the artists have created a colorful bench that reflects the history of hope and recovery offered by the agency since 1966.

East House received a \$1,000 grant toward sponsorship of the bench, based on an idea to represent clients’ images of “hope.” Clients were asked, “What does Hope look like to you?” Thus, the bench includes many of their submitted thoughts and images of hope, such as a sunrise that symbolizes a new beginning, and the hope for a better tomorrow. Three of the agency’s group homes are pictured, where clients say they find peace, caring, trust, and friendship. The seat depicts a road of bricks that each feature a word shared by clients; words such as “confidence,” “believe,” “dreams,” and “recovery”.

The bench also includes a nod to the agency’s history of serving clients in the Rochester area. Symbols of this history are lilacs and a Rochester trolley, painted in colorful detail on the back of the bench.

The “Artists of East House” are: Regina Bolivar, Nicholas Coulter, Mary Curran-Hall, Jo Marie Harter, and Melanie Steenhoff. Regina’s specialty is painting murals and faux-finishes on interior walls. Her full-time job is Recreation Coordinator. She found the bench to be a unique experience, being an outdoor project that the public will see. She appreciates that “We all came together to create a strong vision of hope.”

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Nick Coulter, a Mental Health Counselor, has been drawing and painting since he was a child. His specialty is working in acrylic paint, markers and colored pencils. His most memorable project is having painted two “Horses on Parade” as a high school student at SOTA. “The process of working together has been challenging in that we all have different schedules, and so, piecing it all together has been very interesting,” said Nick.

Mary Curran-Hall, Recreation Coordinator, enjoys working in ceramics, and with fabric and needlework as a Recreation Therapist. She dabbles in drawing and painting as a hobby. Says Mary: “It has been great collaborating with my co-workers at East House on the bench.”

Jo Marie Harter, a Supervisor at a Crossroads group home for women recovering from chemical dependency, typically enjoys jewelry and pottery making as hobbies. “I’m excited about the bench and all that it stands for--second chances at life, opportunities to grow and recognizing that each individual is worth it! “

Case Manager Melanie Steenhoff specializes in artistic needlework, mainly creating felted handbags, flowers and hats. Her business is titled “Things I Like,” and she sells her items at art and craft shows. Says Melanie “I enjoyed working with a crew on this project, since I usually create alone.”

“The bench was a nice way for our staff to come together, share their hidden talent, and promote East House in the Rochester community. They dedicated many extra hours, day and night, to create this amazing work,” said Greg Soehner, President of East House. “I look forward to seeing their work displayed outdoors this Summer.”

Founded by a group of parents in 1966, East House provides rehabilitative, residential and Career Service programs to more than 1,000 people who are recovering from mental illness and chemical dependency. For more information, call 256-3800, ext. 231.