

One Holiday Card, A Coincidence, & A Lifetime of Memories

[Kessler Foundation](#) was looking for a design for its annual holiday card. Arts Unbound immediately came to mind. As a Foundation grant recipient, [Arts Unbound](#) provides training and unique career opportunities for people with disabilities interested in the arts.

[Kessler Foundation Program Center](#) is committed to funding non-profits and social enterprises that expand [employment](#) and [community](#) opportunities for the 54 million Americans with disabilities. Recognizing that one job does not fit all, the [Program Center](#) seeks to expand career opportunities in all industries.



After asking [Arts Unbound](#) to see designs and paintings for the holiday card, Kessler Foundation staff found a painting that caught their eye. A snow-draped forest with a man dressed in red is skiing through the trees. The artist was Greg S., a New Jersey resident.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

TO ALL WHO STRIVE TO
BETTER THE LIVES OF PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES



Several weeks after making the selection, [Kessler Foundation](#) received a [2011 Ann Klein Advocate Award](#) from [The Community Health Law Project \(CHLP\)](#) for its dedication to [improving the lives of people with physical and cognitive disabilities](#). [Rodger DeRose](#), president and chief executive officer of the Foundation (on the right), proudly accepted the award from Harold P. Garwin, president and executive director of CHLP—a framed, beautiful watercolor. The next day, upon studying the painting, it was discovered that Greg was the artist.



Greg found his love for art when he was 5 years old. His father, an engineer, brought home IBM papers and a can of crayons and told him to “get comfortable.” Now, he recreates his travels from winter, spring, summer, and fall.

His watercolor and oil paintings are from his heart. Whether it’s a scene in nature or a shared experience with his family, he captures the moment. For the holidays, Greg—also a wood carver—carved a complete nativity scene as a gift for a friend.

“I get my inspiration from my family,” he said. “My sister takes my father and me with her when she travels. I take photographs of all of the different seasons and I paint from them.”

Diagnosed with schizophrenia, Greg has struggled with finding steady employment. To support himself, he cleans offices. As a small source of income, this 62-year-old man makes daily trips to the post office and performs other errands for an elderly neighbor. She pays \$10 a day, six days a week.



His involvement with [Arts Unbound](#) began two years ago when he entered its “What is Love?” contest and became one of 16 artists nationwide to be featured. Within the first 30 minutes of the exhibit, both of his featured pieces were purchased.

Sparking his interest, he decided to take some classes. Greg then decided to sell some of his pieces at the [Arts Unbound online store](#), which provides him with supplemental income. Some pieces also sell at the Arts Unbound headquarters in Orange, NJ. For the holidays, Arts Unbound opened “Gift of Art”—a holiday gift and craft shop—at 168 Maplewood Avenue, in Maplewood, NJ.

Greg’s mother always helped him cope with his schizophrenia and taught him how to control his emotions. “She was a nurse,” he said. “So she’s the one who kept me alive with her nursing skills and kept me in good spirits.” Sadly, she passed away six years ago. While he’ll always miss her, he finds comfort in painting and sculpting.

He has come a long way from scrap paper and crayons. Living with his father and brother, he has an art room in their home. Overrun by paintings and supplies, however, he needs more room to create. He develops most of his work at local art classes.

Greg enjoys giving most of his art away to his family and friends. To him, art is a means of self-expression. When he finishes a piece, he has the satisfaction of knowing he completed something that someone will enjoy.

“Art enlightens me. It makes me happy. I feel productive, worthwhile, and have the opportunity to make friends. My mother often told me it was important to ‘just relax.’ And that’s what my art allows me to do.”



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