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From Driveway Sales to Gallery Display: Milton Artist of the Month Talks Inspiration

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - As a little kid, Madison Wells sold drawings at the end of her grandmother's driveway. Today, her paintings are on display at Milton Schoolhouse.

After a decade-long break in her art, Wells is the Artist of the Month at Milton for February and March. She said it's been a long journey, but a great experience to rediscover her passion for art, reading, yoga and more after a divorce. She loves her son, she loves her job, and she is learning to love her art.

"I guess that's what my paintings are, just like a piece of me on paper," she said. "When I was in that marriage, I kind of lost myself, lost my passions and things like that...It's been very cathartic and just kind of surreal in a way because everything in my life has kind of led up to being able to rediscover it."

Her 8-year-old son Emmett has helped her to do this. Emmett also loves to draw and paint, and the two of them will often go up to Wells's art studio in her attic to create together. Most recently they painted pictures of the Clark Bridge, which they can see from the studio's window. In March, Emmett's art will join the display in Milton, next to his mother's paintings.

"I think that's the coolest thing, knowing that my son kind of got that talent and seeing what he can do with it. It's given me the drive to be like, 'Let's see what else I can do,'" Wells added. "My son is my passion. The whole reason I left, the divorce, was to better him...I know that I made the right choice."

Her job has also been an inspiration. Wells works as an occupational therapy assistant at an assisted living facility. She tells the story of Bob, a resident who initially refused to work with her. He told her he didn't want to do anything but collect his gnomes, so Wells created a reward system and brought him a giant gnome as a gift for getting involved with the activities and people at the facility. The two of them quickly became "the bestest of friends."

One day, Wells brought Bob a gnome painting she had done just for him. He soon discovered his love for painting, too, and eventually Wells was coming in on her days off just to paint with Bob. He passed away in October, but she has a few of his gnomes in her house, and several gnome paintings that they did together on display at Milton.

Like Bob, the other people at the facility give her the support and love she needs to keep going. She said she did "a little happy dance" with the residents when she found out her first painting had sold at Milton earlier this month. She is learning to show herself the same care and compassion she shows to her residents.

"I spend Monday through Friday, 8-4:30, working with my older folks, learning their stories and helping them find their enjoyment and their quality of life, and I have to remember to do that for myself, too," Wells said. "They're kind of the ones that give me the drive to do that. If I'm putting all my time into you and helping you find that, I

should be doing the same for me because I want to feel as good as what I want you to. That's my drive.”

Going forward, Wells wants to keep painting and improving. She hopes to take one art class each month and plans to sign up for a pottery class with Emmett in March. Rediscovering art has been “an anxious but trusting process,” and she can't wait to see what will come next.

“I have good and I have bad and I enjoy all of them,” Wells said. “I know I'm not the best artist in the world, but I am going to improve and keep getting better pieces each time. This is just the start.”

To keep up with Wells's art, follow her [@madisonbcanvas on Instagram](#).