

Camphill Special School
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Artist plans *plein air* painting day to
benefit youth with special needs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2009 The first annual *Plein Air at Beaver Farm*, an all-day marathon of outdoor landscape painting to benefit Camphill Special School's Transition Program for teens and youth with developmental delays, will be held on August 8, 2009. Artist and mother-of-three Nancy Bea Miller is organizing the day and has rallied thirty fine artists from the Main Line and Philadelphia to participate in the benefit. An exhibit and sale of work produced that day will be held in November at The Rosenfeld Gallery, in Old City, Philadelphia.

Camphill Special School is a day and residential school for children and youth in kindergarten through age twenty-one who have intellectual and developmental delays. The main campus is located in Glenmoore and its Transition Program is in Phoenixville.

Miller, who exhibits her paintings at galleries in New York, Philadelphia, Portland, Maine and other cities, felt fortunate when three years ago her son

Henry, now age fifteen and diagnosed with autism and mental retardation, was admitted to Camphill Special School, located just forty-five minutes from her home.

"Kids come from all over the country and beyond to attend Camphill Special School," said Miller. "A young woman in Henry's class is from Kodiak Island, Alaska and one student's family moved from Spain so their son could attend Camphill. It's an amazing school with an international reputation, yet strangely it remains relatively unknown locally. It's a gem hidden in Chester County, PA."

When Miller, who teaches painting and drawing at the Main Line Art Center and the Wayne Art Center, learned that the school is expanding its Transition Program for eighteen- to twenty-one year olds with intellectual and developmental delays, she wanted to help.

"Teenagers with special needs are an underserved population," Miller stated. Camphill is one of the few schools that addresses the lack of services and programs for this population and I honor them for that."

Plein Air at Beaver combines Miller's love of painting with appreciation for the beautiful fifty-five acre organic farm where the school's Transition Program is located. "I visited Beaver Farm and was knocked out by its

intense, other-worldly beauty and sense of deep peace," she said. "As a painter with lots of artist friends it seemed natural to organize a *plein air* (outdoor) painting day at the farm to both raise money and make new friends for the school."

Between twenty and thirty of the greater Philadelphia area's best artists will gather to paint at Beaver Farm. "I've been absolutely astonished by the response from the artistic community," said Miller. "I knew my artist friends were generous, caring people, but I had no idea how many of them would be interested in this. I am amazed and grateful."

Participants will include internationally known artists Stuart Shils, Elizabeth Wilson, Jeffrey Reed, head of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art's painting department, Al Gury, and other well-known artists such as Alexandra Tyng, Marianne Mitchell, Valerie Craig, Joe Sweeney, and Jon Redmond.

An exhibit and sale of the work produced at the event will be held in November at The Rosenfeld Gallery, in Old City, Philadelphia.

"I hope people will come out to the show and support the artists and Camphill Special School's Transition Program in November," said Miller.

"Beaver Farm is simply stunning and people will be able to view these

wonderful artist's diverse interpretations of that beauty, and support an equally beautiful cause at the same time."

Camphill Special School's mission is to create wholeness for children and youth with intellectual and developmental delays through education and therapy in extended community living, offering a platform for deep and meaningful participation in life. Piloted in 2002, the school's Transition Program provides a successful path to high quality adult residential and vocational placements for vulnerable young people, improving their lives and the lives of their families. Ninety-three percent of its graduates have achieved appropriate adult placement. Those interested in more information about the school or *Plein Air at Beaver Farm* should call 610.469.9236 x131 or visit the school's web site at www.camphillspecialschool.org. The rain date for *Plein Air at Beaver Farm* is August 9.

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Henry Downs (15) in front of a painting of his brother Hugh, March 2009

Photo: Nancy Bea Miller



*Beaver Farm, in Phoenixville, PA April 2009
Photo: Nancy Bea Miller*



Nancy Bea Miller painting en plein air, June 2009
Photo: David Lee