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PRYOR ART GALLERY HOSTS “PORTRAITS OF HOPE” EXHIBIT



Columbia State Community College's Pryor Art Gallery will feature the traveling exhibit “Portraits of Hope: Inspirational Stories from the Lovelady Center.” The exhibit, which portrays women and staff from the Lovelady Center in Birmingham, Alabama, will be open to the public from March 13 until April 7.

The Lovelady Center is a faith-based, drug and alcohol addiction program for women in Birmingham founded by Brenda Lovelady Spahn in 2004 with the goal of giving back hope to women affected by addiction. It started with just a few women leaving prison and entering Spahn's home for rehabilitation. Today, it serves 400 women and 90 of their children. The Lovelady Center resides in a converted hospital that has dorm-style rooms, play areas and school rooms for the children, a worship center, classrooms, counseling areas and onsite work opportunities. A book has been published about Spahn's story, titled “Miss Brenda and the Loveladies,” which will soon be made into a major motion picture.

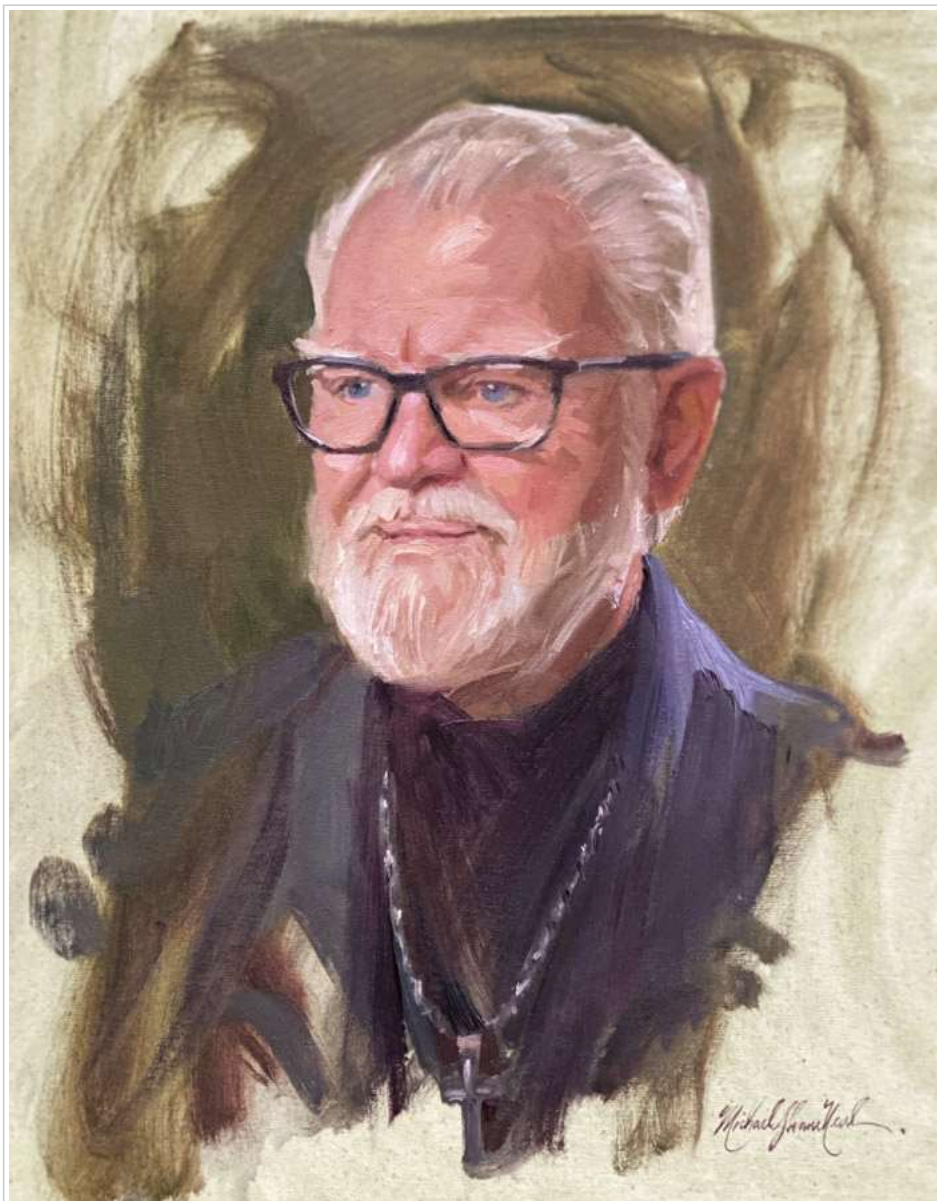
“The Lovelady Center program was affordable and completely changed the life of a family member very dear to me,” said Lisa Hoffman, Pryor Art Gallery curator, who has personally visited and volunteered at the center multiple times. “Her accomplishments throughout the program, and post-graduation, are impressive—I pinch myself every day.”



John Howard Sanden, Brenda.

The exhibition will display 43 oil portraits by 40 nationally and internationally renowned artists. Beverly McNeil of Portraits, Inc., in Birmingham wanted to help support and bring exposure to the Lovelady Center. Using her connections in the fine art realm, McNeil organized the award-winning portrait artists who donated their time to paint the recovered women, their children and the faithful staff. The exhibit has since traveled to the Salmagundi Club in New York City and the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia, before arriving at the Pryor Art Gallery.

Included in the exhibit is Spahn's portrait by John Howard Sanden, a Connecticut-based master portraitist who passed in 2022. Sanden, one of the nation's leading portrait artists for four decades, served as the art director for Billy Graham prior to launching his career as a portraitist. Sanden received the John Singer Sargent Medal for Lifetime Achievement Award and painted the official White House portraits of President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush. His depiction of Spahn displays her gentle nature and warmth.



Michael Shane Neal, Father William.

Two of the accomplished artists in the exhibit are Middle Tennessee natives, Michael Shane Neal and Dawn E. Whitelaw, both of whom are Lipscomb University graduates. Neal has painted Sandra Day O'Connor, George H.W. Bush and Richard Thomas from "The Waltons." Whitelaw is with On Track Studios in Franklin and is an award-winning plein air artist. She is a member of Portrait Society of America, Oil Painters of America and Plein Air Painters of the Southeast.

"The caliber of oil paintings in this exhibition normally are only seen in private collections, museums and places like the White House," Hoffman stated. "We are thrilled to have this exhibition in our own backyard of Columbia to serve our students and community."



Dawn E. Whitelaw, Into the Light.

The exhibit is free and open to the public. The Pryor Art Gallery is in the Waymon L. Hickman Building on the Columbia Campus located at 1665 Hampshire Pike and is open Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m. - 7 p.m and Friday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The opening reception, which is also free and open to the public, will be March 16 from 5 – 7 p.m. in conjunction with the Performance Series Appalachian Road Show concert. For information about the First Farmers Performance Series and tickets, please visit www.ColumbiaState.edu/Performance-Series.

For additional information about this exhibit, please visit www.ColumbiaState.edu/PryorGallery or on Facebook at ColumbiaStatePAG.

For more information about the Pryor Art Gallery, contact Hoffman at 931.540.2883 or lhoffman5@ColumbiaState.edu.



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