

# Arts Fest spreads awareness of learning disabilities

By Brendan McNally  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Jane Jantzer-Wilson used art at the Sidney Friedman Memorial Park Thursday to explain to the public something she says is almost impossible to understand — learning disabilities.

Jantzer-Wilson, a volunteer with The Learning Disabilities Association of Centre County (LDACC) for 30 years, said the organization's goal is to advocate for children, parents and teachers, as well as to raise public awareness about learning disabilities.

"It's really hard to understand what a learning disability is if you don't have one," Jantzer-Wilson said.

That's why the LDACC's Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts booth featured simulation exercises that give people a feel for what it might be like to have a learning disability, she said.

In the simulation, visitors were asked to trace a simple star, with one catch — they could only see what they were drawing through a mirror.

While children played instruments at the neighboring booth — the Instrument Petting Zoo — and others gobbled down snow cones and kettle corn, parents couldn't help but laugh at the trouble they had tracing the star.

Each visitor had different problems completing the task, while others couldn't complete it at all. Jantzer-Wilson said the exercise simulates a writing disability and shows people how frustrating a learning disability can be.

While parents and teens were being baffled by the simulation exercises, young children got the chance to transform a plain, white piece of paper into art with paint.

Karen Anstett, another 30-year volunteer with LDACC, said she had the four-foot yellow easels built

for the first year the group participated in Arts Fest and has been using them ever since.

"It's fun to watch the faces to see how excited they are to paint," Anstett said.

Some of the children were so young they had never painted before, she said.

The LDACC provided the paper, paint and palettes, while the children supplied the art.

"We see a lot of rainbows and flowers," Anstett said. "And we get a lot of abstract art."

A laundry line hung from three trees where dozens of paintings were hung up to dry and display.

After painting his first masterpiece, child Gavin Smarkusky came back for more, yelling to his mother, "Look, I'm finger painting!"

At first, Smarkusky was shy to explain his artwork. But eventually he warmed to the idea and talked about his paintings.

"That one is finger painting," he



Photo by Steph Witt

Arts Fest patrons gather among specially trained dogs.

said. "And this one is colors and drawings." ing back again another year. "I might," he said with a smile.

Smarkusky added he liked that one event enough to consider com-

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