

New Prague Times, March 29, 2012. The Elders finished the plasticine bas-relief art plaques with Kiersten Dahl-Shetka and their Mighty Helpers (Past students of the process helped the Elders- Tweens, Teens, Adults, Family, and Friends).

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Senior Lifestyles For Older Adults & Their Families

Mala Strana residents detail lives in art

By Patrick Fisher
Staff Writer

What aspects of your life would you preserve in bronze? A group of residents at Mala Strana Health Care Campus recently made that decision as part of an art project.

"We started by asking questions," said local artist Kiersten Dahl Shetka. The questions ranged from what was something that everybody knew about them to what they did in life. "From there we came up with a few visuals."

The 11 residents with help from family and friends then made clay plaques that detail various parts of their lives. The plaques will be used to make molds for bronze casting. The bronze plaques will eventually be added to the art tower in Phillips Park near the intersection of Highway 21 and Main Street.

The first step, making the clay plaques, was done Monday, Feb. 20, through Friday, Feb. 24. Residents who participated were Bea Bowman, Elsie Sznisek, Helen Kazelka, Helen Javarek, Howard Holm and his wife Kathleen, Robert "Bud" Javarek and his wife Stella, John Wagner, Jeanette Deutsch and Jack Lepeska.



Patrick Fisher Photos

The second group included, from left, Kathleen and Howard Holm, Jack Lepeska, Jeanette Deutsch, John Wagner and Stella and Robert "Bud" Javarek.

Shetka worked with Terry Korbel, therapeutic coordinator for Mala Strana. He also helped with one of the plaques, as Helen Javarek is his grandmother.

Kazelka was a nurse, so featured prominently in the center of her plaque is a nurse's cap and a stethoscope. Off to the side is a small portrait of Dr. E. E. Novak. Deutsch also has a representation of her work. A bookshelf on the art piece is for her time as a

librarian. Howard Holm has a symbol for his job as a sheet metal worker.

Robert Javarek has art for when he served in the Army Corp of Engineers in World War II. There is also a small St. Wenceslaus Church symbolizing when he changed the windows in the church's strows.

Sznisek had on her plaque a farm house. "I was born in this house," she said pointing at it. "I lived here until I

moved here (to Mala)."

"I like to knit and crochet. I had six cats," explained Bowman about the main objects on her plaque. Knitting needles, a ball of yarn and a cat take up the majority of space on it.

Some of the art had some surprises for family members. Lepeska's piece includes a train chugging into a tunnel and a ferris wheel. As a younger man he loved to catch trains. The ferris

wheel represents the time he worked in a circus.

Many of the plaques have symbols for the people's faith and their families. Across the top of Wagner's artwork are 15 figures. "My wife and I had 13 children," he said.

Wagner also has a buck on his piece. Shetka explains, "In one day he shot two 10-point bucks and then a spike buck."

"These all turned out beautiful," said Shetka of the plaques. "I was honored to work with everyone."

The project was done through donations from local sponsors and the state Legacy Fund.



Residents at Mala Strana Health Care Campus participated in an art project recently. In one group were, from left, Helen Kazelka, Elsie Sznisek, Bea Bowman and Helen Javarek.