

Best Practice: *The Gallery at Springhouse*

We have been trying this year to highlight "best practices" among our member communities so as to encourage those communities who need suggestions to find ways to move ahead. At Springhouse, the Gallery is really outstanding.

When you enter the building, the Gallery stands there on your right, usually decorated with artwork, but every six or seven weeks completely naked as the old show is taken down and the new show laid out and hung. It is a dramatic space with a large deep red wall and two considerably smaller off-white walls. It can hang several small pieces on one wire or a very large piece covering a lot of space. Most shows include 20 to 25 pieces but some shows have had only five or six.

The committee includes one staff person and about six members who make it their business to identify artists who might be interested and find out how to contact them. During their monthly meetings, the group discusses artists they have found, arranges to visit the artist's studio if possible, and invites those artists who seem interesting to show at Springhouse for a period of six or seven weeks. They try to showcase a variety of media and techniques so that each show has a learning segment, as well as a feast for the eyes. In some cases, the artists have come to Springhouse during the time their show is hung and worked with interested residents to teach them at least the rudiments of their art.

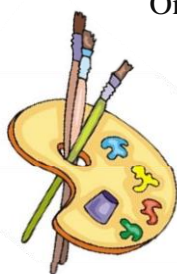
In any case, the artist is invited to dinner on a Friday night and asked to bring a friend or significant other. After dinner, the artist talks about what he/she has done and answers questions from the audience. Usually there are about forty people in the audience whose interests range from details of technique to the

meaning of the artwork to how the artist finds time to do what he/she does when there are so many other demands on his/her time. If necessary, the artist's companion may help in passing small materials around the room, or members of the committee may take on that task. Afterwards, there is a small reception with yet more questions being asked.

On a scheduled date, the artist returns to help with the dismantling of the show and to take home the artwork that was being shown.

In all of this, Springhouse may not seem much different from any other CCRC. Most folks have some area where they display art, although not every place has an area specifically set aside for a changing art show. Some places seem to give little thought to how they display their art while others hang what they wish to display with an eye to the impression that will be made by the entire show. Some want to hang the art themselves while others ask the artist to help make decisions about hanging (and thus get a much better show.)

The "best practice" comes from the combination of all the factors-the interest in many forms of art from painting and photography to quilts and wallhangings to carved wooden objects. It lies in the outreach to many artists who are interested in very different things and the ability of the committee to see the value in different kinds of expressions. It lies in trying to see and appreciate each artist's work and see the



the quality in very different forms of expression. It lies in seeing how different artists approach a similar problem and how each approach highlights something different. And especially lies in the

committee itself - its steady vision, its willingness to highlight novel approaches, and its constant outreach to artists both experienced and inexperienced to bring us shows that are always interesting and frequently informative.

