

# Art league has angel in midst

*New member worked daily for six months to renovate building, 2-acre grounds*

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Commercial-News  
Dec 22, 2010

DANVILLE — The fact Kem Wiggins joined the Danville Art League only five months before it took possession of its new quarters is no coincidence, according to Carol Garver.

“I believe Kem came to us because she had a need and the art league had a need,” said Garver, vice president of the art league. “And God put us together.”

Wiggins, who was nominated by Garver as a Christmas Angel, said she joined the art league in October 2009 because she felt she needed to get involved in something.

“When you join the art league, they try to find something for you to do to help contribute to the group,” explained Wiggins. “When I joined they said they needed someone to do a little cleaning and to make calls if something needed repaired in the building.”

“I thought, sure, this is something I can do easily,” added Wiggins.

Then in February 2010, the art league took possession of its new home, the former Red Cross building, at the corner of Seminary and Franklin streets.

“I went from taking care of a 1,100 square-foot building to a 6,400 square-foot building sitting on 2½ acres,” Wiggins said.

“She is just an amazing person,” Garver said of Wiggins. “When we made the move, she just rolled up her sleeves and went to work.”

According to Garver, Wiggins has patched and painted walls, ripped up flooring and laid tile flooring and supervised the knocking down of an interior wall.

“Then she moved outside,” Garver said.



Commercial-News/Deb Edwards

Carol Garver, right, stands with Kem Wiggins, her Christmas Angel nominee, at the Danville Art League building. Behind them is one of Wiggins' paintings.

Garver said the grounds were a little unkempt when the art league took possession of their new location.

“She cut down bushes and small trees as well as pulled up poison ivy with her hands,” said Garver. “All this with a smile on her face.”

Wiggins agrees that she did haul off several loads of branches and brush but she downplays that she did it alone.

“I had help,” she said. “The kids from Peer Court and Schlarman High School volunteered as well as community service workers helped as well.”

“I really received some great help from Habitat for Humanity volunteers on taking out a wall inside as well as some work on the grounds,” added Wiggins. “We also had volunteers from Vermillion Advantage that helped us out.”

Wiggins also said that other art league members helped on renovating the building and grounds.

“There are some two dozen art league members that have regularly worked on the building and grounds,” she added.

Wiggins said she worked daily at the

art league for six months.

“There was just so much to be done,” she said.

Wiggins said she now knows why she and her daughter sat and watched so many do-it-yourself shows on television for the past two years.

“It helped prepare me for what I was doing,” Wiggins said. “I did so many things I never dreamed I would do.”

Wiggins also serves on the art league's publicity committee and maintains their online calendar.

Wiggins' background is in art, not home improvement. She taught art for one year in Kankakee before moving to Danville. She was a substitute teacher in Danville for 10 years.

Now she does interior mural works and commissioned art work.

Wiggins said she also has a new love.

“I fell in love with the art of the Walldogs this summer,” said Wiggins. “I am planning on attending their event next year in Plymouth, Wis.”

“I know what she has accomplished with the building and grounds has put a sparkle in Kem's eyes,” said Garver. “And we know what she did put a sparkle in the community.”