

'Faces of Winkler' show on now at WAC

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Every face has a story and the Winkler Arts and Culture Centre is sharing a dozen of them this spring.

The Park St. gallery launched its second annual Faces of Winkler exhibition Friday night.

The show invites artists and photographers to create artwork inspired by a member of the community. Selected subjects run the gamut from those notable for their business or leadership contributions to everyday people who help make up the mosaic that is Winkler.

"We don't want this to be about celebrating just people who everyone knows," said WAC board chair and Faces artist Tomm Penner. "We have those people, but we also have students from high school, people who work for non-profits, people who

might not be in the public eye, people from every different background."

Familiar face or not, the resulting artwork, photos, and write-ups provide a glimpse into people's lives you might not normally get.

"What strikes me about this show is it can bring out a side of someone that you didn't know. It's all about the people ... everybody has an amazing story," Penner said, adding that you're seeing as much of the photographer and the artist in the work as you are the person being portrayed. "Each piece you see, I think of it as an intersection between the artist and the person or the photographer and the person."

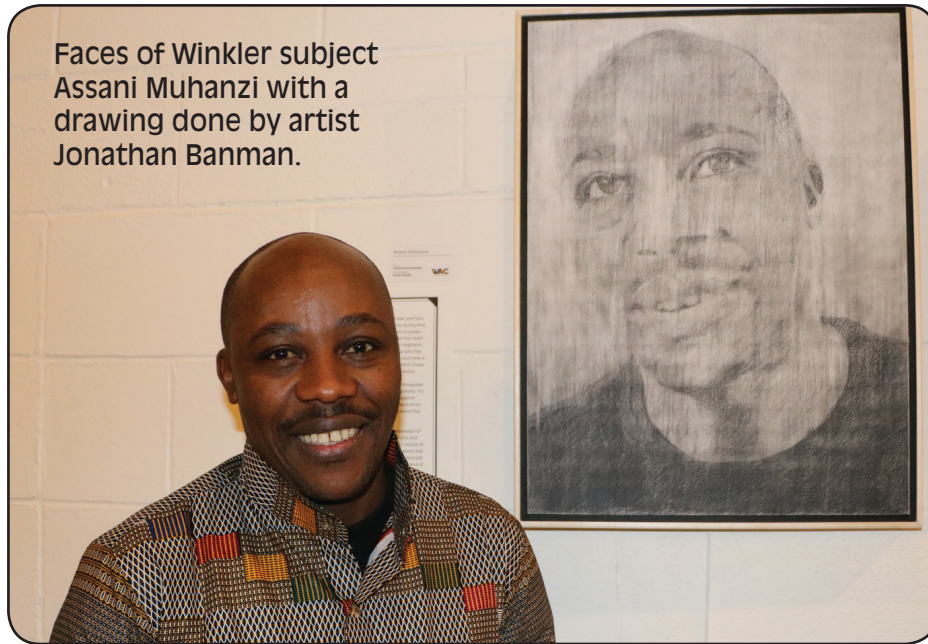
Penner's piece includes a million beads representing each child who has been reached by the work of his subject, Children's Camps Interna-



PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

Willi Richardson with her portrait of subject George D. Klassen at the Faces of Winkler exhibition kick-off at the Winkler Arts and Culture Centre last Friday.

Faces of Winkler subject Assani Muhanzi with a drawing done by artist Jonathan Banman.



tional director Ray Wieler.

"To me, art is about telling a story or making you feel a certain way," Penner said, adding that each exhibit in the show achieves that in its own way. "When I come in here and I see all these write-ups, these descriptions sharing bits and pieces about people's lives, I'm overcome with emotion because I think it's a powerful thing."

Being a subject is certainly a unique experience, said Assani Muhanzi, who immigrated to Winkler from the Congo several years ago. Muhanzi was sketched by artist Jonathan Banman and photographed by Kara Wieler.

"First of all, it was a surprise to see someone notice I am here," he said of the nomination. "But I said sure right away. I'm not here to hide my face. I am so proud to be in Winkler ... every single opportunity I can get to say how blessed we are here in Winkler, I will grab it."

"This looks beautiful," he added of the artwork. "It really represents me. It is me."

Capturing the essence of his subjects was certainly the goal for photographer Scott Jantzen, who has multiple pieces in the show.

"I was trying to capture the joy that he experiences when he's on the ice," he said of GVC student Nic Klassen, who is depicted geared up to play sledge hockey. "And then also using off-camera flash to highlight his big hair and his big smile."

Artist Willi Richardson noted she tried to go beyond the public persona to get to the real person in her pencil portrait of businessman George D. Klassen.

"When I was told the project was to be on somebody who is being recognized for their part in the community here, I went in with a whole different perspective. I wanted know the person. I don't want to know all about the business ... but to be able to sit down and talk about who he is."

Those talks led to Richardson incorporating some of Klassen's own poetry into the piece.

"I walked in and I had no idea what I walked into," Klassen said as he checked out the show. Of Richardson's piece and Jantzen's photo, which shows him in his home surrounded by items he's collected over the years, he added, "It's perfect ... this is my life."

Faces of Winkler is on display at the arts centre until April 25.



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