



# Talent in miniature

*The smallest art can make the largest impact*

By Shelby Lindrud  
West Central Tribune

## Willmar

There is the ancient proverb about how good things can come in small packages, and the Willmar Community Center will be illustrating how true that can be with its latest community project — Little Art Gallery Willmar. Starting in May, wooden display cabinets will be installed at five locations across the city to showcase the vast artistic talent found in and around Willmar, just in miniature.

“I saw the idea first on (the social media site) TikTok,” said Riley Kennedy, community center program leader. “I was like, ‘oh, I like art. Oh, we can do that.’”

Britta Diem, Willmar Community Center director, was quick to approve the new project and jump on board.

“It is kind of a spinoff of the little libraries that are around town,” which have become quite popular, Diem said. “So why wouldn’t this take off and be good for the community too?”

Instead of books to share, the boxes will display a diverse collection of tiny artwork, created by local people. There might be paintings, yarn work or sculpture. The only requirement is the piece by no larger than 6 inches by 6 inches and be family-friendly.

Anyone is welcome to create a piece to be displayed in a box, no matter their age or artistic abilities.

“Do what you want; there is no expectations,” Kennedy said. “You can experiment and see what happens.”

Seven wooden display cabinets have been built by volunteers at the community center’s workshop, using materials donated by the volunteers and Perkins Lumber. PrintMasters is also helping out by providing information cards and stickers to put on the boxes, to explain the galleries to people passing by.

“We can’t thank them enough,” Kennedy said.

The first five gallery boxes will be installed at Robbins Island, Swansson Field Complex, Ridgewater College, Willmar Public Library and Bethesda.

Each box has been painted with a motif to mirror its location.

For example, the Robbins Island box has a fish on it, while the Swansson Field gallery is painted to look like a hive with



Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

**Above:** A fully furnished Little Art Gallery sits on display on Tuesday at the Willmar Community Center. **Top:** Program leader Riley Kennedy, center, helps Marco Juarez, 4, right, set up his painting station as fellow painter Fran Syverson, left, lends a helping hand during the Little Art Gallery gathering on Tuesday at the Willmar Community Center.



Marsha Milani works on painting a tree on Tuesday during the Little Art Gallery gathering at the Willmar Community Center.

honeycombs and bees in a nod to the Willmar Stingers baseball team.

The galleries will also have small flower boxes on top, to add even more visual appeal.

“It is coming together really nicely,” Diem said, adding the ultimate goal is to create and

display 10 little galleries in town.

To get the project off to a successful start, the community center has been hosting a series of free art workshops in April, open to all. The last two are scheduled for April 19 from 3 to 5 p.m. and April 22 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the center.

Starting in May there will be one workshop per month at the center. There is also an idea for workshops to be held in different locations, perhaps where the galleries are displayed, “just to give it more visibility and a way for the groups supporting it to create art for their boxes,” Diem said.

Each month, there will be a suggested theme for the exhibits in the galleries. The monthly workshops will have instructions and materials for various art projects at which people can try their hand.

However, artists are more than welcome to create something completely from their imagination. The art for the boxes doesn’t have to be created at the community center either. Artists can create their piece at home and drop it off or mail it to the center.

“If you have the creativity and you have something you want to make, make it,” Kennedy said. “We’ll put it in a box. You don’t have to follow the theme.”

Initially, the galleries will be

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