



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Senator Addabbo Hosts Dynamic and Diverse Artists Showcase Displaying Talent From Across the District

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. December 19, 2024



Senator Addabbo admires the handmade quilts by Louise Naples.

A man who plays four harmonicas simultaneously, a 7-year-old piano prodigy, and a woman who turns mixed materials into shoe sculptures – these are just some of the talented constituents who were featured at Senator Joseph P. Addabbo’s Artist Showcase, which was held on December 15, 2024, at the Forest Hills Jewish Center.

The three-hour event was jam packed with musicians and still artists providing a feast for the senses that delighted everyone in attendance. Many were surprised that so much talent was located right in their own neighborhoods. Artists were able to connect with other artists, and the public was able to discover new talents. Some 22 artists (7 musicians and 15 artists) took part in the one-of-a-kind event.

Brianna Rizzo, a Girl Scout Senior on a full art scholarship at Christ the King High School, brought her Gold Award project to Senator Addabbo's Artist Showcase. As an Ambassador of Creative Visions who funds Students Rebuild, Brianna encouraged participants to be a "piece of peace." Every puzzle piece designated a \$5 donation from Creative Visions for a total of \$800 donated to peace building organizations around the world!

Anakin Josten, age 7, wowed everyone with his outstanding piano playing as people watched his fingers fly across the keyboard. Harmonica virtuoso, Jiayi He, stunned audience members by playing four harmonicas at one time and what he called the world's largest harmonica and the world's smallest harmonica. Passersby gazed with wonder at the shoe sculptures of artist Jennifer Merdjan. She has been making sculptures by repurposing every shoe she has worn for the last 30 years, and she has no plans to stop in the future.

One could not walk through the room without stopping at Louise Naples' table where she showcased her stunning handmade quilts. Over the last 20 years, she has made two hundred quilts of all shapes and sizes from placemats to art quilts to king sized bed covers.

"I have had the honor of my quilts being displayed in numerous venues, including the offices of Senator Joseph Addabbo and Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, who both fervently support the art and artists of Woodhaven," Naples said.

“Thank you to everyone who participated in our very first Artist Showcase,” Senator Addabbo said. “It was a truly inspiring event, and it was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the abundant talent in Senate District 15. We are looking forward to turning this into an annual event and having our 2nd Artist Showcase next year.”

Special thanks to the Forest Hills Jewish Center and its Executive Director, Deborah Gregor, for their generosity in allowing the space to be used for this event, providing the perfect setting for a celebration of creativity and community. Also, thanks to one of the participants, Silk Feather Sun, for providing the sound system for the musicians.

“I’m always glad when Forest Hills Jewish Center has the opportunity to support our community and our local elected officials,” Gregor said. “Senator Addabbo has been a true and consistent friend to FHJC, and this inaugural Artist Showcase is a worthy event that we are proud to have helped facilitate.”

Video highlights from the showcase are available on the Senator Addabbo’s YouTube Channel at the link below:

[https://youtu.be/q5GhGiPd6Y8?si=UsI2\\_hCHxoN-2wa\\_](https://youtu.be/q5GhGiPd6Y8?si=UsI2_hCHxoN-2wa_)