

## Portraits of healing

**By Danielle Ameden, Daily News staff**  
**GHS**

Posted Aug 27, 2007 @ 01:12 AM

Newton — Made of oil paints, watercolors and brush strokes with heart behind them, portraits of the Virginia Tech massacre's 32 victims stood for hope and healing in a Crafts Street backyard yesterday.

The artwork, destined for victims' families, brought hugs and tears as the volunteer artists - from the Boston area and beyond - met, shared their pieces, and reflected on the most devastating mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

"I was angry and I was hurt and I can't stop the violence, but I can do something like this," said Brookline painter Ruby Pearl, who came up with the idea for the memorialization project the afternoon of the April 16 massacre.

"From that moment of feeling, of need, needing was what it was ... We all put our hearts into it," she said. "We just need this for closure."

Framingham's Sorin Bica, a mortgage broker and resident artist at Fountain Street Studios, portrayed 20-year-old Virginia Tech freshman Henry Lee.

Using bright colors, paint knives, natural-bristle brushes and his fingers, the 42-year-old Romanian native gave his mixed-media project his all.

"It's a small thing that one could do," Bica said. "It's a very difficult task. It inspires (in) you sadness. We're all (sad) by what happened."

Mat Poirier, a 33-year-old elementary school art teacher who hails from Canada and lives in Boston, created a graphite drawing of Matthew La Porte, an Air Force cadet and 20-year-old Virginia Tech freshman from New Jersey.

"It's just sort of personal," said Poirier, who was a teenager in Montreal in 1989 when a 25-year-old man gunned down 14 female engineering students and then shot himself at Ecole Polytechnique. "It really shakes your foundation."

Wayland's Melody Winnig created portraits of Virginia Tech students Julia Pryde, Ryan Clark and Professor G.V. Loganathan, using a mixed-media approach with photography, oil stick, collage and watercolor.

"You just got a sense of what an amazing person," she said, explaining the research that went into her work.

It began with 22-year-old Clark, her first subject, who was a senior with a 4.0 grade point average and a "magnetic" personality.

"How can I honor the energy?" Winnig asked. "It was very intense, emotionally."

Leslie Sherman, a sophomore double-major from Virginia, became Blackstone artist Renee Dumont's "angel" in a gold-framed oil portrait.

"I think we all feel like they're our angels now," said Dumont, who paints pets and people for her business, Paw-traits. "As artists, we seek inspiration and we turn around and we want to inspire."

Framed In Time, of Framingham, donated more than \$4,000 worth of frames for the project, which wraps when the portraits are bubble wrapped and mailed to Virginia this week.

"This is really an amazing project," said Eric Friedberg, a former Framingham resident who volunteered to help Pearl coordinate logistics for the project, such as shipping and hosting yesterday's event.

Veronika Loginova, Friedberg's wife, created a portrait of sophomore Virginia Tech English major Ross Alameddine, a "very bright kid" from Saugus who also liked to paint, she learned.

"He's still with us," Loginova said. "I believe that people don't die ... that's what I tried to show."

Pearl, an artist at Brookline's Gateway Arts, painted 18-year-old Virginia Tech freshman Rachael Hill in black and white on a stretch canvas.

"There's never ever been a better experience in my life," she said of the project. "It hurts to know that these victims brought us all together."

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