

# Budding artist debuts work in pop-up exhibit 'All For Life'

Illness took Rubio Garza's livelihood, his home and his health. It brought financial

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hardship, daily physical pain and episodes of depression. What it hasn't robbed is the kindness in his eyes and a fighting, creative spirit that he has channeled into a budding artistic career:

"It helps him a lot," his wife of 36 years, Nelly Garza, said of her husband's artwork. "We live in a little RV. Sometimes we go home, and it's all over the place, but if it is helping him, why not?"

"All For Life," Mr. Garza's debut art exhibit featuring roughly 25 pieces, opens Sunday, December 11, and runs through December 16 in the lobby of Georgetown Public Library.

A reception will be held at 2 p.m., December 11, in the lobby. Pieces will be available for purchase with proceeds earmarked for medical expenses for him and — he prays — his future liver donor.

### A road to recovery

Mr. Garza's health and financial problems started five years ago after he had a stroke and became unable to continue his remodeling and landscaping business.

"It's been one thing after another since the stroke," Mr. Garza said. "After that



Artist Rubio Garza's work will be on display at the Georgetown Public Library December 11-16.

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stroke, all my customers, they never called me again. I had to sell everything — all the machinery that I had — to survive. It was only my wife working. Thanks to her we did it."

After two weeks in the intensive care unit, followed by extensive rehab to learn to walk and talk again, Mr. Garza thought he was on the mend.

"It was two and a half years after the stroke that I got an umbilical hernia," he recalled. "It was growing and it was hurting, so I decided to get it repaired."

Mr. Garza developed a post-surgery infection that severely damaged his liver.

"It was more difficult for me to do stuff because I was always in pain," he said.

"I was getting so stressed, depressed. I had anxiety attacks because I couldn't do anything. I couldn't help my wife to bring money to the house to make payments."

In November, Mr. Garza underwent a transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt procedure to relieve the pressure of blood flowing through his diseased liver. It dramatically improved the fluid back-up and pain he was experiencing.

"Thanks to God," he said. "My stomach is not creating fluid, and I don't have any pain. I don't have to go every week to get four to eight liters of fluid off my abdomen. Sometimes I was crying because it was too painful."

Mr. Garza's insurance approved him for the liver transplant. Finding a willing, compatible donor is the challenge.

"There's a lot of people who wait so long," Mrs. Garza said.

### Artistic endeavors

Mr. Garza's first explorations into creating art came at the prompting of one of his sisters, who had found an artist online who turns empty glass bottles into decorative pieces.

"After that, I started doing the bottles," Mr. Garza said. "I started selling bottles. It was helping us a little."

Years ago, Mr. Garza worked for a fabric business and enjoyed decorating and sharing design ideas with customers.

"[Designing bottles] wasn't all that I wanted to do," he said. "I wanted to create something. So, I started painting. I still have the first one that I did. It was something very simple."

"After I did that painting, I decided this is what I want. The ideas started coming out like that without thinking."

Mr. Garza experiments with different techniques to bring out unique textures on his canvases. He works primarily with acrylics and has some mixed media pieces that incorporate family photos or stock images printed on paper.

"The one with the tiger, I was just going to get something abstract, then I found I had the colors that were like a safari," Mr. Garza said, describing a mixed media piece.

Once he feels comfortable with acrylics, then he will try his hand at oil paints, he said.

"I love my paintings. Each one I like more than the one before," Mr. Garza said. "The depression, all of that, it is all gone. I don't feel it because my mind is always thinking, and I am always painting now."

Mr. Garza wants to exhibit his work at other places in town and is considering entering art competitions.

"I think it is a great opportunity," he said. "They compete for money. You are going to meet people who are going to buy art. All I want the money for is to support the people who are going to help me with my liver."

Joyce May is a Library Assistant at the Georgetown Public Library.

### Select events at the Library

December 6, 10 a.m.: Homeschool Happenings (tickets available one hour prior to the program)

December 9, 10:30 a.m.: Sensory Storytime

December 10, 5-7:30 p.m.: Winter Wonderland: A Real Mad Hatter is presenting Winter Bubble Land on the second floor at 5 p.m. Games, crafts, stories, prizes, a tattoo station and bubbles will be on the first floor

December 16, 10 a.m. to noon: Camille's Memory Café (pre-registration required)

December 17, 1-2 p.m.: Hygge Holiday Tween Event (ages 9-12)

December 17, 3-4 p.m.: Hygge Holiday Teen Event (ages 12-18)

December 18, 2 p.m.: Live music at the Library: Hot Pickin 57s

For more information about these and other library events, visit [library.georgetown.org/events-calendar](http://library.georgetown.org/events-calendar) or call 512-930-3551.

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