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Boy's art on cards sold by national autism group

By Christine McCluskey

Journal Inquirer

MANCHESTER — At 10, he had his own art exhibition. Now, at 13, eight greeting cards featuring his art are for sale on a national Web site.

Manchester resident Ben Carroll's colorful paintings of animals decorate a line of cards sold on www.autismspeaks.org, an advocacy Web site for those with autism.

"We're just really excited that his notecards made it there," Ben's mother, Laura-Lee Carroll, says.

Ben's art features elephants, zebras, giraffes, parrots, and other animals.

Ben, who spent early months of his life in a Bulgarian orphanage with poor conditions before he was adopted by the Carrolls when he was a year and a half old, has autism.

He attends the Intensive Education Academy in West Hartford and takes art lessons at home.

In October 2004, an exhibition of his work titled "Benny's World" was held at the Developing Artist Institute, an art school on Hartford Road where he used to take lessons before it closed.

Laura-Lee Carroll had been producing packages of the cards based on Ben's art her-

self and selling them locally for a while before she decided to send some to Autism Speaks.

The manager of the organization's online store immediately expressed an interest in Ben's work and said she could arrange for Autism Speaks to produce the cards, Laura-Lee Carroll says.

All the money from the cards, which sell in sets of eight for \$15 plus shipping, goes to support Autism Speaks' efforts, which include funding research, raising public awareness, and supporting those with autism and the people who care for them.

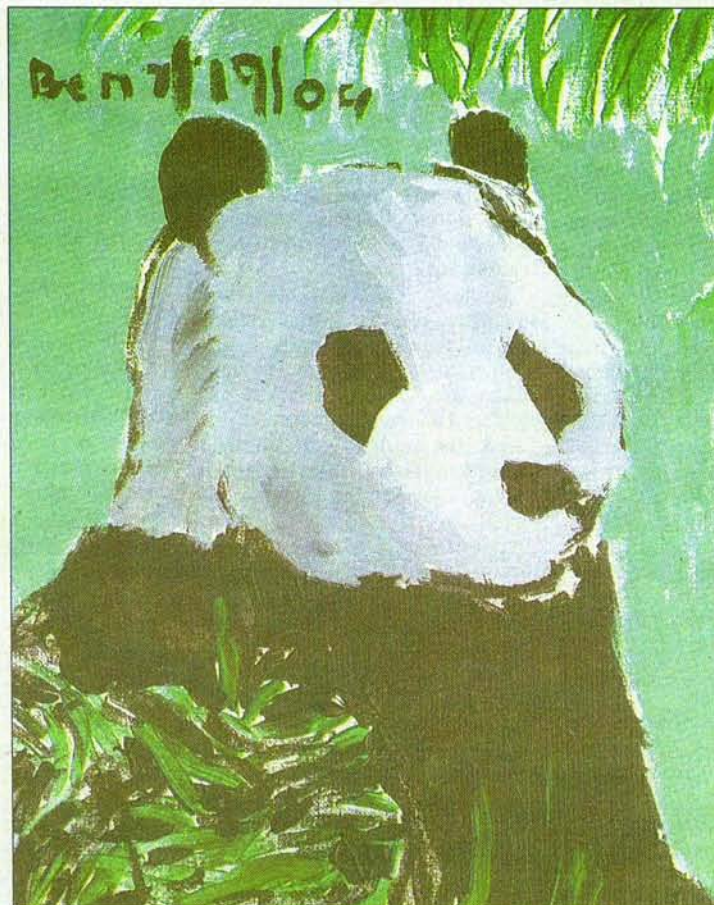
Laura-Lee Carroll hopes that Ben will be able to continue with his painting and "by the exposure, maybe be able to support himself when he's an adult with art."

She says that since the cards went up for sale on the Web site, Ben has received supportive e-mails from all over the country. A brief biography of him is on the site.

To purchase the cards, click on the "Store" link on the right side of Autism Speaks' homepage, and then on "Notecards by Ben Carroll" link.



CARROLL
... developing and marketing his talent



At right is a drawing of a panda by Ben Carroll, 13, above, of Manchester. It is one of the cards he sells on an advocacy Web site for autism. Carroll is autistic.