

Artist captures local boy's love of fishing

Seven-year-old Hunter Phillips of Red Wing is the latest subject of a Wild Wings artist, Rollie Brandt, who created an original painting of him ice fishing on a sunny day in Red Wing last winter.

The 20 by 24-inch painting, titled "Nibble n' Jig," was featured recently in Wild Wings' 34th annual Fall Festival originals show and is currently on display at gallery headquarters in Lake City.

Brandt captured the active second-grader's love of fishing as he sits on a bucket in his fur hat, one leg swinging, a fishing pole in one hand and a sandwich from mom in the other as his dad ice fishes nearby.

Hunter, the son of Dave and Cathy Phillips, attends Burnside School.

"He's a typical 7-year old kid, busy and active and truly loves to fish year 'round," said Brandt.

"We are all dock neighbors ... at Ole Miss Marina, Bay Point Park," she explained.

She's gotten to know the whole family, including the boy's grandmother, Betty

Guse, as we k e n d neighbors.

"E v e r y time his famly visits their boat, I see Hunter very intently fishing off the dock,

and it makes me happy to see a kid doing something that doesn't involve a video screen. Whenever he catches a big bass, you can hear him yelling his news as he runs down the dock to show me," she said.

Brandt and her husband, Phil, spend every weekend from April through October at Bay Point, and she often paints while on the boat during bad weather.

"Our boat is like our 'cabin' and we feel like Red Wing is our other home" she said.

Hunter was also painted in a smaller work while fishing last summer, wearing shorts and a life jacket, with his bare feet dangling off of G Dock at Bay Point.

Wild Wings had been encouraging Brandt to do another ice fishing scene,



Phillips

she said, and she wanted Hunter in it. They all met at the park last winter and did some ice fishing near the docks while Brandt took nearly 50 reference photos.

She then spent two to three months in her studio in Webster, Minn., painting the scene.

"I wanted to include Hunter's father in the painting nearby," she said, so instead of docks and a rocky bank she created a different shoreline. His mother also played a role, bringing hats and clothing to give Brandt a choice.

"She didn't realize when she packed Hunter a sandwich that I would be so excited to see that as a great addition to the painting," the artist said. "Hunter eagerly devoured that sandwich without even slowing down his fishing while I took pictures. He barely noticed I was there."

Brandt also hid her subjects' names within the painting, in the trees. "I took it another step further by substituting the brand name on his boots with the family's name 'Phillips,'" she said, and she included his grandmother by painting in her husband Bill's vintage Thermos.

In 1993 Wild Wings, now owned by Cabelas, published Brandt's first limited edition print of a Webster boy ice fishing. She has had 22 prints published over the past 13 years with Wild Wings.

Her paintings have appeared on three covers of Minnesota DNR's Hunting and Fishing Regulations booklets, more than two dozen magazine covers, several greeting cards, calendars and other products.

"With my paintings I try to depict kids happily 'being kids,' much like life in the 1950's and '60s when I grew up," she said. "I would be outside for hours, sledding until I was soaked. Or in the summer I would sit on the dock all day with angle worms and dirty fingers busy fishing for sunnies.

"You will not see me paint angelic children wearing clean white lace gowns in a room with flowered wallpaper," she said. "They will more likely be



Rollie Brandt holds the summer photo she painted of Hunter Phillips fishing at Bay Point.

dirty or have a scratch on their knee or Band-aid on their finger, wearing clothes that they've outgrown, or have not yet grown into, in their own

back yard, on a dock, or somewhere in their neighborhood having fun, getting into mischief, trying something new or mimicking an adult."



'Nibble n' Jig'

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