

# Although embracing art later in life, prolific artist shines



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**PROLIFIC ARTIST** — Dee Kennedy, shown here with her dog Chou Chou, has created more than 75 paintings over the last several years. Her artwork is visible in the background.

By **RAY PITZ**  
Sherwood Gazette

Dee Kennedy's room at Avamere at Sherwood is something of a mini studio/art museum. Because it's here where Kennedy spends much of her time creating her unique paintings.

Kennedy, 82, came to art later in life but has shown great potential, according to D.K. Boljat, the Sherwood artist who discovered Kennedy's raw talent not long ago.

Although Kennedy had dabbled in water colors in the past, she didn't take painting seriously until 1½ years ago when Boljat began teaching an acrylics class at Avamere.

"I liked it plus I had the time (to do it)," said Kennedy

Some have even mentioned Grandma Moses, the renowned folk artist who came into art when she was in her 70s, when they see Kennedy's works.

Most days you can find Kennedy in her room (under the watchful eye of her toy poodle Chou Chou) painting, except for the days she needs to stock up on painting supplies and takes a trip to Michael's.

"I'm so proud of you," Boljat said to Kennedy while visiting her room as well.

Kennedy's first finished acrylic painting was of a Murdock Road barn, which once hung in her office when she was a volunteer receptionist at the old Sherwood Police Department once located in the Murdock House.

Soon she started giving

her paintings to family members, part of a large brood of extended family that includes 17 grandchildren.

A Sherwood resident since 1995 and an Avamere resident for almost eight years (she previously lived in Tigard), Kennedy once owned Dee's Donuts, a California shop that carried 125 varieties of donuts.

While she's taken on a number of subjects over the last few years — tropical settings, landscapes, dogs, flowers — she doesn't like to paint the same picture twice. She tried it once and found it to be a struggle.

On this particular day, a painting of a tropical island scene sits on her easel.

"I've taken it from a couple of postcards from Hawaii," she said, noting that if she really got working on

it, she could finish it that same day. But she tries not to limit her subjects.

In fact, postcards are the inspiration for many of her paintings with greeting cards and newspaper photos also used as sources.

And she's prolific as well, having completed 75 paintings over the last several years. Kennedy said she began upgrading to canvas boards once she discovered that paper was too flimsy for her paintings.

"I figured if I was going to do it, I wanted it to last," she pointed out.

Today, Kennedy keeps her paintings to smaller formats, the result of dislocating her right shoulder several years ago.

But her creative streak didn't come totally out of the blue.

**HELPING OUT** — Sherwood artist D.K. (Darla) Boljat, left, makes a suggestion to Dee Kennedy during Boljat's monthly art class at Avamere at Sherwood.

**"I have to say it does my heart good to see Dee painting there at Avamere. Each month I come to paint with her she has a few new paintings she finished and shows me."**

Artist D.K. Boljat

"When my husband was alive, we did a lot of miniatures," she said.

An example sits on a nearby windowsill — a small wooden pie case created by her late husband, Larry, holds an assortment of Kennedy's pies, sculpted out of Fimo clay. So intricate are the creations that Kennedy made each tiny cherry sticking out of the pie.

Now she attends Boljat's Avamere classes regularly.

"That's sort of the highlight of my month is going to art class," she said, pointing out painting gives her something to look forward to.

She takes the elevator to Boljat's class, which Boljat usually begins with a visual prompt. On this particular day it's a landscape painting of Mount Hood. Kennedy already knows the techniques and digs in, making sure she doesn't lay on the acrylic paint too thickly.

"I have to say it does my heart good to see Dee painting there at Avamere. Each month I come to paint with her she has a few new paintings she finished and shows me," said Boljat who has been teaching painting since 2006 and who has more than 100 paintings in collections throughout the United States herself. "I am so happy for her!"

Avamere even has one of Kennedy's paintings on display — a painting of Princess, a sheltie that once belonged to one of the residents, which has been placed at the facility's reception desk.

"She's phenomenal," Sabrina Thompson, Avamere at Sherwood's activities coordinator, said of Kennedy's talent.

As Boljat points out during the class, "You never know who has what potential."

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