

Local artist paints to preserve area's family farms

Local artist Rollie Brandt sees more than just pretty scenery wherever she drives.

Cresting a hill or rounding a bend in the road can offer her inspiration for her to go home and create an original painting of her rural surroundings – a family farm with the sun light on it, dairy cattle peacefully grazing in a field, an old barn that is showing its age and a silo covered in vines.

In recent years Brandt has focused her painting on the family farm, which she feels is slowly disappearing from the rural landscape.

"I want to preserve some of these beautiful pieces of rural Americana if I can," she said.

She has attracted the attention of one of the country's top calendar card and gift companies, Lang who will be producing a wall calendar of Brandt's work in a calendar entitled "On the Farm," beginning in 2009.

Several of the farms that appear in this first calendar are from around Dakota and Scott counties and will be recognized by local residents.

The barns include a white barn and vine colored silo from the Hille Farm on County Road 86, the Stanton farm on Pillsbury and County Road 86, the brick farm house just south of Lakeville South High School, and a red barn showing its age on County Road 27 in Prior Lake across from the nursery.

The "On the Farm" calendar will picture Brandt's paintings of farms, barns and animals found on local farms in this area south of the Twin Cities.

"I have met some of the nicest people by simply stopping by to get permission to walk around and take reference photos. Many of the farm families I've met have some wonderful stories to share and have been so hospitable."

Art for the calendars is painted and selected long before people even think of purchasing their calendars.

For example, this month Lang made the final choice 12 of Brandt's paintings for the



Photo submitted

Rollie Brandt with "Bob's Round Barn" on the Devine family farm on County Road 2 west of New Market - to be in the 2010 calendar.

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"I was painting all through 2007 for a calendar that will be used by people three years later, and now I just started on my 12 paintings for 2011," Brandt said.

One of the paintings that will appear for 2010 is of a flock of chickens and the rooster, "Alfred" who live at the Wagner Dairy Farm west of New Market.

"I live just a mile or so from this nice family farm and on my way home from work I stop and buy their delicious fresh eggs, pet the dogs and visit with LuAnne. They are such nice friendly people ... even the dogs! I



Photo submitted

"Nick's Place," named after St. Nick for Christmas, is on the Kevin Ryan farm on County Road 70 just south of the new Lakeville South High School. It is in the 2009 Calendar for December.

spent a couple visits sitting down in the dirt, taking reference photos of the chickens for the painting I'm working on now, and it's turning out well."

On some of the paintings, she hides the owner's name painted within the branches of a tree or in the grass.

"I think the people enjoy that their name is hidden like this. I liked doing that on my paintings of kids as well," Brandt said.

Her first couple farm paintings were titled after the artists' favorite relatives, but once she started to meet and get to know each farm family, she now always names them after the owner, such as "Alvin's Place" on County Road 86.

"Most farms are called 'so-and-so's place' by the other farm neighbors, even if the farm is ever sold to someone new, so I like to name my paintings after the farmer, too," Brandt said.

Brandt has been a painter for most of her life and in 1993 Wild Wings, headquartered in Lake City, and now owned by Cabelas, pub-

lished her first limited edition print of a Webster boy ice fishing.

Known for her realistic paintings of "kids being kids" she has had 22 prints published over the past 13 years with Wild Wings, which publishes and markets both original paintings, prints and home decor items.

Brandt's paintings have appeared on three covers of Minnesota DNR's Hunting and Fishing Regulations booklets, over two dozen magazine covers, several greeting cards, calendars and other licensed products over the years and she is known for her paintings of children, domestic animals and fishing and water scenes.

Wild Wings handles the paintings when they are complete, photographing them for possible uses in products and also marketing the framed originals as well.

"If Wild Wings does make prints, I always give the family a few to share. The print market has slowed down in past years so not too many do get printed, so I am very excited that 24 of them will be in such a beautiful calendar," she said.

The 2009 "On the Farm" Wall Calendar is being distributed to stores and will be available this summer and fall from Wild Wings and countless other gift shops and stores throughout the country, as well as directly from the calendar's Web site at Lang.com.

"I think the calendar will especially be enjoyed by people here in my area because they will be able to recognize most of the scenes that I have painted," Brandt said.

To see all of Brandt's work and learn more about the artist and the "On the Farm" Calendar, visit RollieBrandt.com.