

Arts

Making each day special

Artist's paintings of Lakeville children are featured in 2006 calendar

by Ruth Dunn
THISWEEK NEWSPAPERS

Rollie Brandt stopped by a major chain bookstore last week to see if her calendar was on the shelf. It was!

The 2006 calendar, entitled "Young at Heart," features 12 of Brandt's realistic paintings of children, including 10 Lakeville residents. The wall-hanging calendar is published by Tide-Mark Press of Connecticut.

"That was so fun to actually see it [the calendar] in such a great store," said Brandt, who lived in Lakeville for many years until building a house in Webster three years ago.

"I've waited for my own calendar for 12 years! I've had a month before [in other calendars] but never 12 months — my whole calendar," she said.

The calendar is just one more notch in the artist's paintbrush.

Art has always been a part of Brandt's life. As a child, she doodled in the margins of her school papers.

Her first big break came in second grade when her teacher selected her to do a mural. "She



One of Rollie Brandt's favorites entitled "Corn on the Curb" was selected for the calendar. It was painted by Brandt in 1996 and features a young brother and sister watching a Lakeville Pan-O-Parade. They were actually sitting further back on the curb, but Brandt moved them further up to the curb.

gave me the chance to be an artist," says Brandt.

During the years she was a stay-at-home mom with three children, there wasn't a lot of time to do art. But once her children were grown, Brandt's career really took off.

When she decided to get serious about art, she took slides of her work and sent them off to publishers. Wild Wings of Lake City liked her work and took her under their wing. Her images are for sale in the company's catalog and in many other ways such as trinket boxes at Wal-Mart.

It was difficult when she began to sell original paintings. "It's hard to part with them, they're like babies." But when a buyer offered \$1,900 for her first sale, she decided to let the painting go. "That was money for my son's braces," she said.

Children are the most fun to paint. "They are less inhibited," she said. "Plus we all remember being a child."

She paints children in a realistic way. "I paint kids being kids and doing what they enjoy most." She paints children playing with their pets, watching parades, having tea parties, fishing and just plain having fun.

In her paintings, children's clothes might not fit right, their socks might have holes and their knees might be dirty. "These are real kids; not fake kids all dressed up and posed," she said.

She works from photographs. "Kids can't sit still for two months," she explains.

Brandt is a self-taught painter who uses acrylic paints. "I'm too impatient for oils," she admits.

While people are her favorite subjects, faces — especially skin — are the nerve wracking part of painting. "It's hard to get it just right."

A trademark of hers is to hide the names of subjects in the paintings amongst branches, grass or planks in a dock, for example. "You can't see unless you know where to look."



Submitted photo

Rollie Brandt's paintings feature real children doing things they love to do like search for tadpoles.

Besides the calendar, she considers other painting successes to include a painting of a cardinal selected to hang at the Dakota County Government Center. Her artwork has been selected as the cover of three hunting regulations handbooks published by the Department of Natural Resources.

It was her husband Phil's idea to submit work to the DNR. "Phil comes up with lots of good ideas," said Brandt. He is very supportive of her art.

The two are high school sweethearts and 1970 graduates of Rosemount High School. Phil is a carpenter — an artist of a different sort, says Brandt.

She works out of their home in a large studio, created by combining two bedrooms. There's lots of natural light and two big drawing tables.

Brandt intends to keep painting kids. Soon she'll have a grandchild who is likely to become a favorite subject and will no doubt appear in many paintings.

Lately, she's been on a kick of painting old barns in the area — the red ones are her favorite.

She also works as a freelance painter in product development for Dept. 56, the company that creates the Christmas villages. "It's another way to connect with artists," said Brandt. And she does face-painting with her daughter.

Upcoming events for her include the Wild Wings Fall Festival in Lake City this weekend and the grand opening of the new



Cabela's store opening in Rogers in October.

Brandt finds it inspiring to participate in events with other artists. "We feed off each other. When I see their work I just want to go home and paint."

She continues to be enthusiastic about art and is overflowing

with ideas of what she wants to accomplish. Even though she's in good health, "I won't live long enough to do all my ideas," she says with a laugh.

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