

ART FOR ALL



Louise Hathaway, 100, of Rossville shows off one of her winning ink drawings. This stilllife won a second-place award in the Arts in the Park festival.

Matt Huber/Commercial-News

League welcomes variety of artists

By Keith Bouslog

If you really want to feel the pulse of the Danville Art League, watch the artists at work at the 502 Sherman St. studio. During open studio, any member can come to work on a current project.

One recent convert to art is longtime Danville musician Betty Grove. She always wanted to learn how to draw. She was pleased to realize that all she needed was a little coaching to see she has a natural knack at drawing.

League members know they help each other in many ways. Some have studied at the college level and beyond. Others

have grown through various workshops.

Recently one artist briefly dropped by with her painting. She had nearly completed a county fair scene in oils. "What does it need?" she asked. Three or four artists immediately gathered around to verbally brainstorm and discuss ideas together.

Carol Garver, a former public school art educator, laughed as she quipped, "You know me, I always got to make a suggestion."

League members are frustrated that onlookers think they are an exclusive clique.

"Until people take a class or

come to an event, we are unable to dispel this untruth," president Marsha Russell said.

A unique camaraderie is prevalent among these artists. Members of the group typically err on the side of too-few suggestions instead of too many. Most will give advice only when it is specifically requested.

"We welcome every one: experienced artists and beginners," emphasized membership chairman Becky Engle. This carefully groomed lady made room next to her for tattoo-covered Jeromy Taylor. He arrived late for open studio. Her project: an oil seascape from a late 1990s Florida Sanibel Island photo. His: a metriculously detailed ink pen

drawing of Batman.

Taylor joked with the other artists as he resumed work on his project. The ladies smiled and quietly opened their hearts to this excited newcomer because they want to encourage his passion to draw.

Garver said, "Art has a unique language. Every discipline has its own language. The arts are what make us human. The arts are a big part of enjoying life. The arts bring sensitivity to life. And when you paint, you see the world differently."

She added she hopes area schools will realize the importance of art in school curriculum priorities.

Young teen artist Paul Groth has taken art league classes for four years. During a recent open studio, he progressed with his Sea of Galilee oil painting. His project with New Testament characters will fulfill a home-school project.

The future for the Danville Art League? Russell didn't hesitate to share her vision: "I would like

to see the Danville Art League grow in both membership and in opportunities for our members and those in the community who would like to explore their artistic abilities. I would love for us to be able to expand our current facilities so we could offer more classes.

"I would like to have the space and equipment for a pottery studio, a glass working studio, photography artist, glass workers, print artist and others to be able to all work at the same time (by) providing more open studio time for our members. I'd like to have a full-time classroom setup and an artist gallery that is opened regular hours for the public to enjoy."

Russell is proud of the lone centenarian member, Louise Hathaway. A University of Illinois Extension Service art class in the late 1980s stirred Hathaway's latent interest in art. That class led to her membership in the art league. At that time, the league had suffered from a period of apathy.

Soon Hathaway and her daughter, Sharon Schmitz, became art league officers. After a lot of hard work, morale was boosted and excitement returned to the group.

Currently there are more than 100 members of the art league.

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Contributing membership fees are \$10 for any student, \$25 for an individual, or \$30 per family.

E-mail the league at danvilleartleague@hotmail.com. Its Website: <http://www.prairienet.org/danvilleartleague>

Art league meetings are the second Thursday of each month. The league has scholarship applications available for student and adult classes.