

Arts & Entertainment



Rachel St. Lifer's masterpiece, left; leaf prints by Peohling, Felter and Goldin, above; Mallory Boesch's paper-folded portrait, top right; and Rachel Newberg's tempera, bottom right.

WF District's Youth Art Month Display Left Us Longing for More

By MICHELLE Le POIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - Last March, the walk past store windows to examine the artwork of Westfield's public school students was much slower. Gloved hands around the pen and pad, it was always worth confronting the cold in order to stop and record every name and snap all of the photos.

This year, while the warmer spring weather was a gratifying change, fewer town windows were semi-filled with artwork, and only a few gems deserved the spotlight of this annual article.

Tempera paintings have always been a favorite in the district's annual celebration of March as Student Art Month, and are typically scattered through every corner of the town. Yet, minimal examples were found this year - one of the best in the window of Dave Rossi Photography on Quimby Street. Bravo to Rachel Newberg, Art I student, who did a commendable job painting a believable assemblage of rocks, trees and branches in her landscape.

Edison Intermediate School eighth grader Rachel St. Lifer's colorful homage to 60s Pop painter Roy Lichtenstein

enhances Nirvana on East Broad Street with the bold question posed by the subject, "Is he staring at me?" With hues of yellow, red, and white, Rachel did an excellent job mimicking the painter's technique and adapting her own creative flair to the piece.

A mish-mash of different genres was represented at the Town Bank of Westfield, including some rather unusual sculptures of faces fashioned by sixth graders. Enjoyable, however, were the paper-folded portraits by seventh graders like Mallory Boesch.

Seemingly edible, a ceramic cupcake in Bovella's window by Westfield High School ceramics student Randi Ackerman was tempting with its lifelike sprinkles and glossy icing.

Rory Fitzpatrick's lanky giraffe papier-mâché sculpture, complete with googly eyes, deserves a mention, as well as its surrounding friends created by fellow fourth graders, displayed at Lancaster, Ltd. on Elm Street.

The drawings of sneakers commonly shown in the windows of Randal's Shoes next door were substandard. No imagination, no embellishment, and so much better in previous years. What happened? While fifth and sixth grad-

ers usually take on this project, the guidance in carrying out the artwork

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Randi Ackerman's ceramic cupcake at Bovella's.



WAA Outreach Series: Finale - Scratchboard

Michelle H. Le Poidevin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ETCH AND SKETCH... Westfield Art Association (WAA) member Christine Parker, far right, showed Westfield Senior Housing Corporation residents some finished examples of scratchboard art.

Reverse Your Mind, To the Scratchin' Kind

By MICHELLE Le POIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - Through a drawing class she is taking at duCret School of Art in Plainfield, Westfield Art Association (WAA) Outreach Program member Christine Parker has learned the tricky art of scratchboard.

Tuesday morning, at the Westfield

Eileen Willoughby and Barbara Zietchick, who pitched in with suggestions.

Barbara displayed some of the Picasso-like prints she created from metal plates, using aquatint, ink and an etching press. With this method, she explained, "The part of the plate in the acid the longest becomes the dark-



COMPLETED CARVINGS... Pictured, clockwise, are the scratchboards created by Senior Housing residents at Tuesday's workshop: a fishbowl by Doris Miller, a landscape by Mary Bemis, flowers by Matilda Rettman, and a shell by Laura Brewer.

Senior Housing Corporation's (WSHC) Arts & Crafts Room, she shared her knowledge with residents, and her WAA colleagues Mary Cho,

Book Nook At Rainbow's End, St. Pat's Lucky Literature Is Uncovered

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

It is a wonderful testament to the great St. Patrick that 1,500 years after his death, we continue to celebrate his life with a feast day. Books about the saint span all age groups and reading levels, with a large concentration written for the 4- to 8-year-old age group.

Here are a few that the leprechauns left in the Book Nook.

For Ages 4 to 8

Do you know what a bodhran is? How about a ceili? You can learn Irish words and their meanings when you read "The St. Patrick's Day Alphabet" by Beverly Barras Vidrine (Pelican Publishing Company, 2001).

Who is the little man with the pointed ears who helps the citizens of Tralee win the St. Patrick's Day decorating contest?

The secret is revealed "A Fine St. Patrick's Day" by Susan Wojciechowski (Random House Books for Young Readers, 2004).

Young readers can learn the significance of St. Patrick's Day by reading "St. Patrick's Day," one book in the Rookie Reader Read About Holidays Series (Children's Press, 2003).

For Middle School Readers

How about decorating the house or classroom for "the wearing of the green"? You'll find lots of ideas in "St. Patrick's Day Crafts" part of Enslow Publishers, Inc. Fun Holiday Crafts Kids Can Do! series. It's written by Carol Gnojewski (2004).

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Messages of Esteem, Native-American Mores Woven Through Nielsen's Book

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Scotch Plains author/illustrator Gwyn English Nielsen has recently released her third book, an illustrated middle-grade chapter book entitled "Serendipity and the Dream Catcher."

The book centers on Serendipity Tomas, also known as Sera, an 11-year-old bookworm whose dreams are haunted by the class bully, Devin Sharkwell. Sera's uncle Daryl, an Arizonian who "still exists somewhere in the 1960s," sends his niece a Native American dream catcher to help her face her nightmares.

On the first night that Sera hangs it from her bed, the dream catcher speaks to her in a feminine voice. Eventually, with her uncle's assistance, Sera learns to interpret the meanings of her dreams, and in the process, comes to know herself better.

"I wanted to create a story that would enable preadolescents to transcend their fears," Nielsen explained. "The dream catcher is personified in Sera's dreams, yet it maintains the feel of a magical charm, teaching Sera about the power of the self through love. The elements of dream interpretation enlighten Sera so that she is further able to develop into a child with a healthier sense of self-worth."

The author, who was born in Westfield and raised in Mountainside, wrote "Serendipity and the Dream Catcher" for her daughter, Saxony, who is now 13 years old, and her friends, who like Sera, love to read. Saxony was a constant source of feedback for Nielsen as she was writing the book.

Saxony's studies of Native American tribes also provided Nielsen with information that she incorporated into the book.

Nielsen's mother also influenced her writing of "Serendipity and the Dream Catcher."

"My mother was an astrologer who



Photo Courtesy of Gwyn English Nielsen, CGS Press

PAGETURNER... Scotch Plains author/illustrator Gwyn English Nielsen relaxes with a copy of her book, "Serendipity and the Dream Catcher."

The Native American influence characteristic in Nielsen's writing came from several sources.

"I have always been fascinated with Native Americans," Nielsen told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. She added that she has been fortunate to spend time in an area in Utah still populated by several tribes.

read about dream interpretation," she said.

In addition to writing, Nielsen also illustrated the pages of "Serendipity and the Dream Catcher." The book's cover art features former Westfielder Devon English Colby, the author's sister, who currently resides in Utah.

Nielsen's first book, "Torey the Tur-

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Pen & Ink:

With Michelle Le Poidevin

God Bless Mel Gibson for Gifting Us With the Greatest Truth Ever Told

By MICHELLE Le POIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Because of Mel Gibson's overpoweringly prolific and life-changing movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, my coat pockets are crammed with crumpled tissues filled with tears, and images of truth I pray time will not expunge.



Lisa Marie Bastie for The Leader and The Times

CONTROVERSY...unwarranted.

At the Loews Mountainside theater, I watched this movie as an advanced ticket buyer and subscriber to the movie's website (I reserved three tickets in November) and surmised that the only "anti-" sentiment threaded through each minute of this film is defined as "anti-Satan" - not "anti-Semitic."

To twist this cinematic work of art into an Anti-Christian/Anti-Mel Gibson crusade for the sake of inventing an imaginary bias against Jews diminishes everything this film seeks to accomplish. For the onus of Christ's crucifixion was placed in the nail-hammering hands of the Romans just as it spewed from the mouth of the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas. So, for groups seeking to taint this film with the label "Anti-Semitic" it seems they are just grasping for something to gripe about in a feeble, yet endless effort to paint themselves as victims. The only "victims" of this film are those who choose to cover their ears and eyes from seeing and hearing its invaluable message.

Those seated around me were unquestionably impacted and transformed for life. In front of me, sat a large family with small children, who could be heard yelling, "Leave Him alone!" during the scene when Jesus was violently scourged at the pillar by the Roman soldiers. A mother and daughter in our row, crying as many around us, later drew a crowd as theatergoers exited the auditorium - the mother had fainted and movie personnel were not far behind.

The violence had every sense of the body under siege - often forcing many to look away or hide their heads in a blanket of Kleenex - but Gibson's depiction followed the New Testament accounts to the letter, and to those who opine that the film is too violent or gory - it is a bloody truth worth viewing for its spiritual rewards. For, no one can dispute the awesome sacrifice illustrated masterfully and flawlessly by Gibson before throngs of faithful, non-believers, or just the curious attendees. This film did not sugarcoat or merely hint at the torturous, bloody crucifixion commonly associated with *Jesus of Nazareth*. With every lash, drop of blood, scream and sob, viewers not only felt the weight of their sins, but comprehended the vio-

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Queen of Arts

Craft Projects, Books, and Patterns For All the Year 'Round

As Industry Grows, Scrappers Enjoy Countless New Options

By MICHELLE Le POIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

In her book, "Scrapbook Styles, Ease & Elegance," author Jill Miller cites scrapbooking as the "fastest-growing segment in both the crafts and stationery industries," estimating that the average scrapbooker spends \$10,000 per year on the craft.

That might seem like a lot of money to mount photos on paper and add trendy embellishments, but considering the significance of memory preservation, a little cost goes a long way.

Several trends have come and gone since the 2001 article about scrapbooking in *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*. After months of interviewing manufacturers and reviewing samples, we offer these recommendations for your scrapbooking experience.

Build a Foundation... And Stick With It!

Anna Griffin's decorative papers (www.annagriffin.com) epitomize elegance and Southern charm. The Atlanta-based company deserves to boast its line of modestly hued archival quality papers brimming with refined patterns. They coordinate beautifully with the company's die-cuts, stickers and frames. Products by Anna Griffin may be found in local craft stores or purchased at www.paperstyle.com.

Since everything old is new again, *Sei* has become the top scrapbook supplier of retro designs. The Groovy Gal and Beatnik Boy papers, frames, and stickers alone harken back to the "wonder years" when boomer prints and pogo stick motifs were popular. Use these products to assemble a scrapbook of 60s/70s photos and reminiscences of cool memories, man. These products can be purchased directly at www.shopsei.com.

Some of the most sturdy, earthy-flavored and reliable products come from the folks at *Pebbles in my Pocket* (www.pebblesinmypocket.com). The 12x12 papers are exceptionally photorealistic and a pleasure for layout planning.

They also design an amazing assortment of stickers and labels, as Brenda Birrell told *The Leader/The Times*: "Our products are simple peel and stick cardstock stickers with beautiful 3-D hand-created images that create pages within minutes." Layout ideas are available on the website. Visit Crop & Shop in Metuchen to purchase materials. Another supplier of photorealistic

papers and coordinating borders is *Wubie Prints*, although the paper is not as sturdy or imaginative. Judge for yourself at www.wubieprints.com.

Making Memories manufactures one of the most obtainable lines of sturdy decorative papers in all sorts of themes and styles, and lives up to its slogan, "Be Inspired."

Their products are "perfect for the beginner who is looking for something simple, to the advanced crafter who is interested in altering the product to provide a personalized touch," explained Making Memories. Available at local and on-line craft stores, layout ideas are supplied at www.makingmemories.com.

Persnickitty in Utah manufactures papers, tags, quotes and art on vellum, stickers and cutouts that complement each other with a childlike, country and geometric flavors. To view these products, visit www.persnickitty.com.

Less than six months after the birth of her twins, *Scrappin' Twins* was born, cornering a market for mothers/scrappers with multiple children. They provide inexpensive papers and adornments, with sentiments like "twins" and "triplets," matched with metal eyelet words and die-cuts. Visit www.scrapbookmanufacturers.com for details.

Memories Complete was founded by Kolette Hall after she was doing high-end custom scrapbooking in the New England area. The company has garnered accolades from top industry experts for their monochromatic two-tone cardstock and backgrounds. Ribbon Belts with gross-grain textures, and charming COMPLETE alphabets, COMPLETE stickers and (my favorite) COMPLETE slides. Perhaps the most impressive line of stickers on the market, I cannot wait to use them.

Providing a "textured look without the bulk," these standout products can be purchased through online scrapbooking websites. Visit www.memoriescomplete.com for ideas and supplies.

Far and Away's 36-page "Inspiration Idea Book" illustrates the perfect recipes for the company's "Facades" papers and stickers, which are all printed on semi-gloss coated papers, so you know they will survive the test of time. The U.S. State tags are idyllic for the scrapper who loves to travel and chronicle adventures. Find their products at Crop & Shop and visit www.farandawayscrapbooks.com.

Cut With Confidence: *ColorCutters* presents an inventive method of cutting or cropping your photos and papers with their extensive line of 13 acid-free, permanent, non-toxic chisel-tipped markers, which have a small, embedded blade in the tip. The markers, which average \$5.99 each, are accompanied by sturdy "Married Templates" and the "Married Mat" with "Steady Studs" to use while cutting. The company's idea book is a must-have.

According to Teri Kaye of *ColorCutters*, the company has intro-

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"Flower Girl with Present" by Meri Meri



"Simply Stated" by Making Memories



"Pool" stickers" by Pebbles in my Pocket