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Painting with purpose: Local artists raise money for Fair Hill



CECIL MURKIN PHOTO BY MATT GIVEN
CECIL WHIG PHOTO BY MATT GIVEN

Artist Alexandra Bradley uses oil paints to paint a covered bridge on canvas Monday in the Fair Hill Natural Resource Area. Bradley will be part of the En Plein Air Artists Festival this week, which will help raise money to benefit the Fair Hill Environmental Foundation by selling artists' work.

Fair Hill Nature Center will sell paintings at exhibition and auction others

By Sonia Dasgupta
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Many artists use the old barns, trails and farmhouses at Fair Hill Nature Center as inspiration for their paintings.

The nature center is now asking for artists' help as part of a fund-

raiser this week where local painters will create art to be sold at exhibition or auctioned off to benefit the Fair Hill Environmental Foundation.

Carole Huber, organizer of this week's En Plein Air Artists Festival, said each painter is asked to create five pieces of artwork to sell, one of which they will choose to be auc-

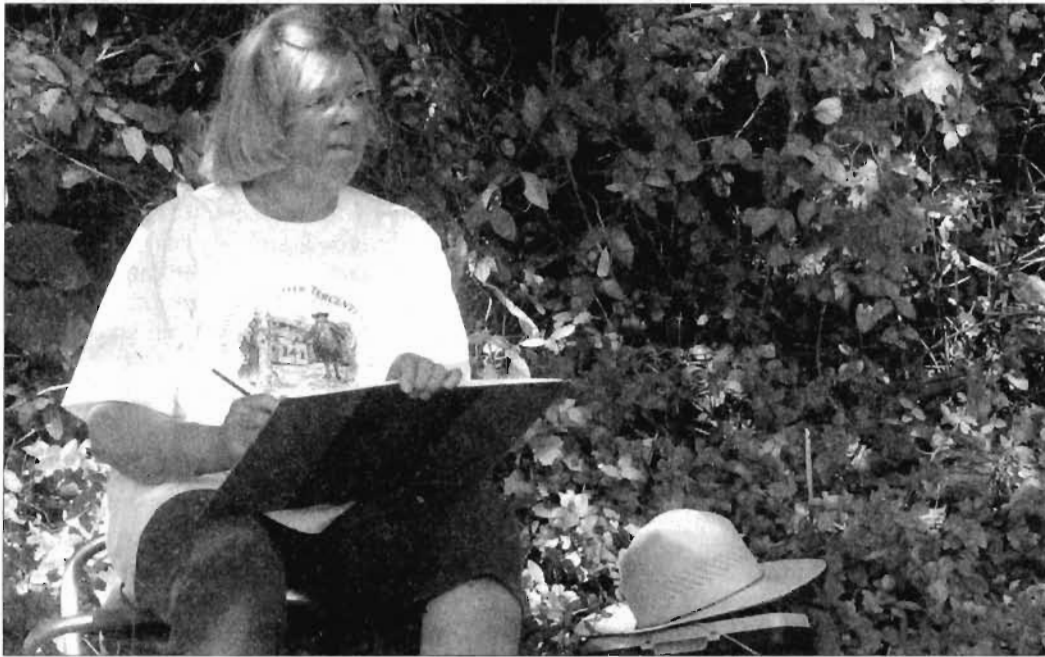
tioned. Huber said 10 percent of the sales from the exhibited pieces will benefit the foundation, while the other 90 percent will be given to the artist. The proceeds made from the auctioned items will be split 50/50 between the center and the artist.

"We also have some cash prizes and gift certificates available for the painters," she said. Judges will also deem a painting "Best in show" and "most creative" and one will be "people's choice." Huber said 21 artists are participating in the event, spending all day in the park creating their art. Geraldine McKeown of Fair Hill

is well known locally for her watercolor paintings.

"It's great to be outdoors on a beautiful day painting," McKeown said. Painting an old green barn on the property, she said she picked it

See PAINTING, A2



CECIL WHIG PHOTO BY MATT GIVEN

Local artist Geraldine McKeown works on a pencil study of an old barn Monday in the Fair Hill Natural Resource Area.

Paintings will benefit Fair Hill

► **PAINTING**, from page A1

because she has a personal attachment to it.

"My ancestors lived on this farm," she said as she looked onto the barn. "I have a real connection to the buildings and the land."

McKeown said she has painted her entire life and comes to the park often.

She gave one of her paintings to Oprah Winfrey, who starred in the movie "Beloved," which was filmed at Fair Hill.

"I like the shapes and colors of this barn," McKeown said. "I sketched another one this morning."

Although she will eventually create a painting using watercolors, she said she usually sketches first.

"I start with the value pattern, with the lights and the dark," McKeown said.

Alexandra Bradley of Wayne, Pa., spent the afternoon painting the covered bridge.

"I live really close to a covered bridge back home," she said. "This one's great because there's no traffic going through it and it's preserved well."

Bradley uses oil paints and does not start with a sketch. Instead she adjusts the picture as she goes along.

"It's a more durable canvas," Bradley said. "So I paint it, and take it off, then paint it and take something off."

She prefers to paint buildings with historical significance and hopes to also paint the hunting lodge and granary while she's here.

The artists can be found throughout the park all week and their work will be exhibited at the Arts Alliance of Oxford on Oct. 4. The auction will be held that evening and then the remaining pieces will be exhibited until Oct. 12.

For more information, call Richard Beards at (717) 951-6418.