

Local Artist Brightens the Community

Local painter Connie Anderson sees everyday objects with an artist's eye

By Dianna Troyer

When people tell Connie Anderson they could never learn to paint artistically, she tells a story about her sister, Pam.

“She was in a car accident and is paralyzed from the chest down and paints beautifully,” says Connie. “She just has to hold her paintbrush a little differently than most people would. Whenever I start teaching an art class, I tell everyone about Pam to show that if you try, you can do just about anything.”

Connie taught arts and craft classes to children at a studio in Malta. She plans to offer lessons at her home north of town in the future.

“No matter what—whether it’s art or doing mechanical repairs—you can learn just about anything, whatever your age,” she says. “Lessons are posted on YouTube these days about all kinds of things.”

Connie, 52, taught herself to paint after reading “The Joy of Painting” by Bob Ross.

“Thirty years ago, I started watching his show on PBS and ordered his book,” she says. “I’ve learned so much, and still love painting as much as when I first started.”

With her sense of humor and artistic vision, she does not always need a canvas to paint on, although her traditional acrylic paintings on canvas hang throughout her home.

With a combination of paints, she transformed her laminate kitchen island to look like it is made of marble. Her clothes washer and dryer are brightened with rows of a stenciled square pattern.

She painted a billowing American flag on the Chevrolet emblem of her husband’s truck on the front grillwork and rear bumper.

She has painted on moose antlers, hand saws and slate.



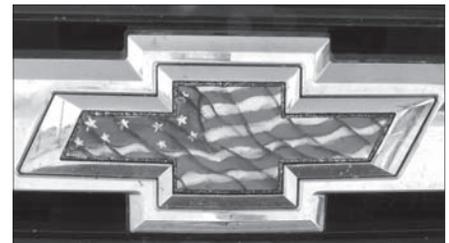
Connie Anderson taught herself to paint. Her work ranges from small canvases and vehicle emblems to large murals.

“I love to paint anything,” Connie says.

She has even painted the sides of buildings. In Malta, car collector Tom Hogan asked her to create a mural on one side of his garage to make it look like his restored cars were parked at a diner. In Burley two years ago, the Cassia County Fair board hired her to paint an 8-by-16-foot mural on the commercial building at the fairgrounds.

“I was nervous with both of those projects because they were such big jobs, but I’m the type of person who’s always willing to try,” Connie says. “I’m grateful Tom and the fair board had faith in me.”

Connie had to use scaffolding at Tom’s garage.



Clockwise from top left, Connie's first mural was on the side of Tom Hogan's garage. Her work includes wood burning and painting on a variety of mediums including a walking stick and Chevy emblem. Two years ago, Connie was asked to paint a mural for the Cassia County Fair.

"I'm afraid of heights, so it was hard for me," she says. "Plus, I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis when I started it, so my hands were clenching and hurting by the end of the day. I'd have to rest them for a while. Since then, medication makes them feel better."

The fairgrounds project took about six months. Connie painted the fair's logo in the center, with four panels surrounding it. She painted each panel separately at home.

"To make sure each panel would line up on the building, I used a chalk line," Connie says. "I was worried they might not fit when they were put together, but it all worked out perfectly."

The four painted panels are some of her favorite scenes. One is her son-in-law and granddaughter moving cattle at Elba. Another is a field being plowed at Sublett. Pioneers

guide their wagons through the City of Rocks in another panel. In the last one, her father, the late Stan Schow, fly fishes in a mountain river.

When Connie finished those murals, she promised herself she would not do any more.

"But then someone asked me to paint Disney characters and shooting stars on walls in their house, so I did," she says.

Connie jokes that her husband, Brett, never knows what he will find when he returns home from work.

"It might take him a while to notice my latest project, but usually he likes whatever I do," she says.

Along with painting, Connie photographs weddings and senior portraits, does face painting, burnishes images on wood and draws with pen dipped in ink.

"I never get bored," she says. "There's too much to do." ■