

Lawn is gallery for this versatile artist

By Loraine McClellan
staff writer

ONCE MICHAEL Thibodeau made up his mind to be an artist, he ran into the same problems many of his counterparts have faced: He would have to be his own salesman, promotion man and agent.

And that consumed a good deal of time he should have spent on the business at hand, sitting down and painting.

His biggest coup to date in the promotion department came when he responded to a request from "The Dayna Show." The hostess was looking for volunteers who have trouble committing themselves in personal relationships and who were willing to talk about it.

"That was me," Thibodeau said. "I am 33 and can't find a wife. I can be so absorbed in what I'm doing here I can literally hole up for two months and not see anybody. I qualified to be a guest on her show and it was the perfect time to promote myself as an artist."

The show aired simultaneously with Thibodeau's third one man outdoor show and it was his biggest success to date.

His first show was on his mother's driveway when the family lived in Kendallwood Subdivision in Farmington Hills. His second was on the parking lot of a Royal Oak gallery. The most recent, this summer, was on his own good-sized lawn where he lives in Farmington and where he sold the bulk of the 100 pieces of work he had on display.

THIBODEAU is an extremely ver-

satile artist. His work ranges from stark realism to impressionism. And he doesn't restrict himself to painting; he works as well with paper sculpture. But with brush in hand, his favorite medium is oils, though he has never settled on a favorite style.

"I just keep trying new and different things and I like them all," he said.

He grew up in Farmington Hills and graduated from North Farmington High School where he studied architecture, "but that didn't allow enough creativity to suit him. He later graduated from Ferris State College where he studied graphics, which, lacking the staying power needed to hold him, gave him a very short-lived career in New York."

Thibodeau is self-taught. Getting a few of his pieces into galleries in Manhattan's SoHo district while working in the New York Times Magazine's promotions department encouraged him to stick with his artistic career. He dived briefly from the visual arts, though, to play drums with a band called the Plutonians. "That fizzled out because of a personality crisis. I'm still writing songs, and I don't think I'll ever give up music altogether, but the goal is to become a successful artist," he said.

The next step towards that end is to find a publisher to serigraph "Up Fifth Avenue," a realistic piece he calls his best to date, and to get more of his work into local galleries.

His work can now be seen in Posner Gallery on Northwestern Highway in Farmington Hills. He can be reached by calling 478-7315.



Farmington artist Michael Thibodeau displays some of his paintings which represent various styles. He sold paints from his lawn during the recent Farmington Founders Festival.

Father's reaction frustrates family

Q. My mother has all the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. She is also hearing impaired. She has a hearing aid but refuses to wear it, which compounds her problem. My father denies that anything is wrong with her, which causes extreme frustration for our family members. How can I make my father understand that in order for us to cope with my mother's dementia, she has to acknowledge that something is wrong and quit expecting everyone to behave as if her behavior is acceptable? He has arteriosclerosis and is not well either.

A. What you and your family are experiencing with your father is not unusual. According to Margie Fuller, program coordinator and education and training specialist at the Alzheimer's Association of Metropolitan Detroit, your father's reaction to your mother's illness is typical.

Most spouses have a very difficult time admitting and accepting that their wife or husband has a problem. There is also fear involved, and if it is Alzheimer's, Fuller states that spouses take a very long time to admit that it is Alzheimer's.

You have written that your



on aging
Renee Mahler

mother has symptoms of Alzheimer's, but you do not say if there has been a medical diagnosis. I would recommend that she receive a complete neurological examination and psychological evaluation to rule out the possibility that she may be suffering from any other disorders that resemble dementia.

ONCE THE diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's is made, the Alzheimer's Association is there to help you, your father and mother and other family members to cope with the disease.

Fuller suggests that you and your family call the Alzheimer's Association. People there can provide you with all types of literature concerned with the disease and the problems that the sufferer and their family must face. Many support

groups are offered, including an orientation support group that meets at the association's Southfield office. The Alzheimer's Association will work with your father and your family to help make the situation better for all of you.

Call the Alzheimer's Association at 557-8277 weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a recording machine that will answer after 5 p.m. and on weekends. Calls will be returned the next day.

Q. My doctor tells me I should no longer drive. I don't want to be stuck in my house or dependent on others. Is there any public transportation I can easily use? Cabs are so expensive.

A. It is very difficult to give up a

driver's license because driving certainly gives one a sense of independence and freedom. There are several areas you may wish to explore.

For information on public transportation, call the Detroit Department of Transportation, 933-1300, or the Detroit Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) at 256-8600 during normal business hours.

You may also wish to check with your local senior center or local community agencies. Many of them offer free or reduced-rate transportation to older adults.

Often your driver's license is also an excellent form of identification. If you turn in your license at any Secretary of State branch office, you will receive, free of charge to anyone older than 65, an identification card that can be used in place of your driver's license for identification.

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Oakland Family Services is a private, non-profit, family mental health agency operating currently out of five branch offices in Oakland County.

The birth companions have all completed prepared childbirth classes and at least 24 hours additional training in working with families. They are closely supervised by the professional staff at OFS.

Making Choices: Facing an unplanned pregnancy can be one of life's most bewildering experiences. Along with an experienced counselor, an individual can sort out feelings and arrive at a plan that is caring, loving and thoughtful.

Adoption/Foster Care: At OFS this is an open process, which may include involvement in the selection of the adoptive parents by the birth parent and future correspondence.

Birth Companion Service: The birth companion service offers a thoroughly trained individual to provide

caring, continuous, non-medical emotional and physical support during labor and delivery at the hospital.

The wide range of pregnancy-related services includes, but is not limited to, infertility counseling, counseling related to the choices of abortion, adoption or parenting, a licensed adoption and foster care program, and a birth companion service.

Infertility Counseling: Couples facing issues of infertility are encouraged to explore the emotional aspects of this experience and their choices.

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