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Comments sting

Casual observers might grasp for a common thread or a hidden meaning especially after learning Cruz has a disability.

Some people have even asked if she had someone help her. Those comments sting.

"My artwork is me, and I did the work," she said. "It speaks for itself."

Cruz sits on the floor in a room with a blank sheet. She grapples to pull the top off the plastic box

containing her supplies. She searches for a yellow pencil, which has rolled behind her.

Once she has a pencil lodged between her middle and ring finger, the liberation of feelings begins. Short scratching noises pierce the determined silence.

Soon, an eye stares back at her from the board.

Cruz starts in the middle and works her way outward. She never sketches.

Sometimes she'll use her feet to do shading. A special mouth guard is being built, which will allow her to hold a brush.

"She'll be up at three o'clock in the morning working on something," said her mother, Dee Cruz. "She likes to work at night."

She'll draw in three- to four-hour shifts. Abstract pieces can be completed in a couple of days. Portraits take longer.

Learned to improvise

She learned to improvise along the way.

"One day I was working on this woman's lipstick and I moved my toe the wrong way and it went down her neck," Cruz said. "So, I made it into a scarf around the woman's neck."

The portrait is in her album. A collection of her work is displayed on the family's living room wall.

Encouragement has come from many circles.

She remembers drawing a picture of a priest without him knowing. She thought he'd be mad, but instead he wanted to see more of her work.

Cruz went to Oakland Community College, where she wanted to major in art. For the first time, she found herself surrounded by other artists.

Her teacher accepted her as an equal, she said.

"That was the most fun because... he would say, 'No, Donna, that's not what I am looking for. How about more shading? How about more lines?' she said. 'I went home and did it because I liked the challenge.'"

Her mother said the state wouldn't pay for her schooling to be an artist. It requires students who have handicaps to major in a career-related area such as computers.

"I got so mad at them," Donna Cruz said. "How can they put you in a certain category?"

"They told me they would help me out if I take this test over again. I was told it was a high school/college level test. I went there and I was so mad. I felt so degraded. They asked me, 'What is a couch? What is a table?' ... I'm like, 'Pardon me? You told me this was a high school/college level test.'"

Her disability hasn't limited her social life. She's participated in the national Cerebral Palsy games, competing in such events as the alalom, soft discus and high teas.

Cruz met her boyfriend three years ago in Minneapolis, Minn. They keep in touch, although he lives in Atlanta.

She also races in a wheelchair going backward. A large trophy sits in her room from a recent 5-kilometer race.

She took a spill from her wheelchair, but finished the race. The winner gave her the trophy for her courage.

"My boyfriend forgot to tell me there was a hill," she said.

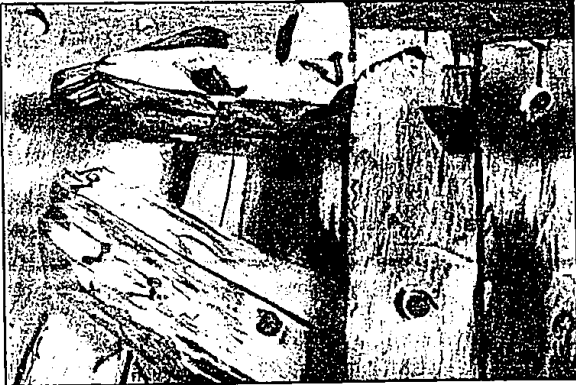
Obstacles don't usually get in her way.



Cruz

STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIEUX

Favorite subject: Artist Donna Cruz says she enjoys painting fashion-model subjects (above). Cruz spent several days on this painting of wood (left).



Hills abolishes special zoning for senior citizen residences

By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington Hills assured owners of senior housing properties that a change in the zoning code won't push them out of business.

The council voted 6-0 to adopt an amendment to its zoning ordinance that eliminates RCE, or elderly housing classification. The council then rezoned seven properties that had been zoned for elderly tenants or property owners.

"This exempts housing for the elderly," said city attorney John Donohue. "They could rebuild after a fire, flood or other catastrophe and it would still be exempted."

That was some assurance for several people attending public hearings on the ordinance change and on the zoning change for their properties.

"This property is (zoned) multiple family for the elderly," said Jeff White, co-owner of an 18-unit apartment building for senior citi-

zens on Osmus Avenue. "I just hope this is not the first step to eliminate this project."

City attorney John Donohue said it was not, and that the change in zoning was a response to problems of determining at what age is a person considered a senior citizen and the likelihood of getting a second mortgage if a property were restricted in the future to a limited population.

"The federal government says 62 is the age (to be considered a senior citizen)," Donohue said. "The state says it's 55. There is no court case that resolves that issue. The other problem was that secondary mortgage companies wouldn't be interested in a property that would be limited to senior occupants or owners."

The elderly housing zoning was changed on seven properties, including White's, to reflect zoning in their particular area. The properties could be kept in their present use, or if they are sold, could be used or developed to reflect their new zoning.

Properties affected were:

■ A site planned for a nursing home of 80 units on the east side of Farmington Road between 13 and 14 Mile. The property was rezoned to special purpose district.

■ A property on Halsted and 13 Mile used as elderly housing was rezoned to multiple family use.

■ The Grand River Village Elderly Housing Development containing 143 units on Grand river between Halsted and Drake was rezoned to multiple family residential.

■ Pendleton Club Condominiums and four adjacent properties Middlebelt south of 11 Mile was rezoned to single family residential.

■ Vacant property on Middlebelt between 10 and 11 Mile would be rezoned to single family residential.

■ Metropolitan Detroit Baptist Manor on Drake north of Freedom was rezoned to multiple family.

■ An elderly family housing project on Osmus was rezoned to single family residential.

who will speak at 1 p.m. The program is open to the public and will include a question and answer period.

The program includes students, city government officials, Rotarians and guests.

The luncheon follows a morning program where students selected from Farmington High School join city officials in typical activities at city hall, concerning themselves with current problems and issues.

After the luncheon, they will participate in a mock city council meeting to address some of these issues.

Rotary's goal is to sponsor a program that will encourage students to consider government work when making vocational choices.

Herrington will speak on the media and how it interacts with government agencies.

For more information, call 476-3960.

Rotarians sponsor government day

The Rotary Club of Farmington wants students to consider government work when making vocational choices.

The organization's Student Government Day program is scheduled for noon Tuesday, April 27, at the Farmington Masonic Temple, 23715 Farmington Road at Grand River in downtown Farmington.

Guest speaker is Jim Herrington, a Channel 7 news reporter,



• **POLISH DAY AT THE DIA**
Saturday, May 1
Gallery Talk and Cello Recital

• **CINCO DE MAYO**
Sunday, May 2
Tours in Spanish, Craft Display, Music, Lecture

• **DIA SHOP AND SHUTTLE**
May 5, 12, 19, 26
From Twelve Oaks Mall, the Somerset Collection or Eastland to the DIA

• **ART FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART**
Thursday, May 6
For seniors

• **EXHIBITION OPENING**
Saturday, May 8
Dale Chihuly: Installations 1964-1992

• **MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH**
Sunday, May 9

• **FAMILY DAY AT THE DIA**
Sunday, May 16
Free Admission Today!
Tours, Treasure Hunt, Puppets, Music, Artist Demonstrations - and lots more!

• **CAP & BRUNCH**
Sunday, May 23
For you and your graduate!

MAY IS MUSEUM MONTH at the DIA.
For information about any event call (313) 633-7971.

HOURS: Wednesday - Sunday
11 a.m. - 4 p.m. (open weekends until 5 p.m. beginning May 8)

RECOMMENDED ADMISSION:
\$4 adults, \$1 children; Members FREE. FREE Admission on May 16.

JOIN the DIA Founders Society at any event in May and receive a FREE DIA POSTER.

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