

OUR TOWNS Cedar County

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Wirth Gallery Takes Pride In Showcasing Artistic Talents

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HARTINGTON, Neb. — Since 2002, Hartington Community Library has held a portal to the area art scene.

The Arlo and Anne Wirth Art Gallery — located in the upstairs of the old Carnegie Library — offers residents a chance to see six art shows a year.

Library director Tami Anderson said she's glad it's there.

"I think it raises cultural awareness," she said. "It broadens people's horizons just to be exposed to art."

The Carnegie Library was built in 1914, and renovated by library board member Clarence Hoensing into a gallery that opened eight years ago this November.

The gallery is funded by the Hartington Library Foundation through a financial gift of the estate of Arlo and Anne Wirth, for whom the gallery is named.

Shows rotate on a bi-monthly schedule. "We've had some really wonderful shows," Anderson said. "With every show, there's unique stories behind it."

Several shows in particular stick out in Anderson's mind.

One of these was a display of works that had been used as covers of *Nebraska Life Magazine*.

"I think we had six artists from across the state that showed their artwork in the gallery," Anderson said. "That was kind of toward when we first opened. That was a really neat show."

Another show was comprised of a family's watercolor paintings from the early 1900s.

"They were absolutely gorgeous, and they

went on to have prints made of these watercolor paintings," Anderson said. "The decision to show them was hard to make because of the value of the artwork. But they were absolutely fantastic."

The gallery features regular events, as well, including the March/April show that coincides with Youth Art Month.

"All the Cedar County schools will get a letter, and they'll be able to submit 14 pieces of artwork from their students. That's a big

tured artist, recent Wayne State University grad Chris Holton — even give presentations in which they describe what their art signifies.

Once the show has opened, anyone can view it during normal library hours. Anderson said it would be difficult to measure just how many visitors each show gets.

"I do have a guestbook, but not all the people sign it," she said. "We have a lot of traffic in this library, so you get the normal day traffic, regular patrons that come in that see every show that we have. But it's a nice way to give exposure to that artist."

A big part of what Anderson does is finding artists with an area connection who would be willing to do a show in the gallery.

"The artwork is out there, it's just a matter of soliciting," she said.

She has met some artists at past shows and through people who have attended shows. She has also worked with Yankton Area Arts, the Norfolk Arts Association and the Northeast Nebraska Arts Association to find potential shows.

"I usually like to have the gallery booked a year in advance," Anderson said. "It's booked for this year, and I have three shows booked for next year, so I've got to get on the ball and get my other three shows filled."

When Holton's mixed media show closes, Arizona photographer Jane Petche will be featured. In September/October, Hartington resident Megan Kuchta will have a mixed media show. In November/December, Tyndall's Judy Mace will have display works in oil, acrylics and pastels.

For more information about the Arlo and Anne Wirth Art Gallery, visit www.hartington-library.org.

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TAMI ANDERSON

show," Anderson said. "Then, as a way to get the word out, we make sure their parents get a flier that says their child will be showing in the gallery."

The November/December show is possibly the year's biggest, as it occurs during Hartington's Candlelight Christmas Celebration and Parade of Lights.

"The library has a big open house, and we draw about 300 people that night, so the artist is usually on hand that night," Anderson said. "That's a popular spot, so anything I have in there, I kind of want it to be a local connection."

Not every show has a big opening with the artist present, but it is something Anderson encourages.

"Once the show is set up, I encourage the artist to send out postcards," she said. "I do the press release, all the marketing, but I encourage them to send out postcards to family and friends to encourage them to come see the show."

Some artists — including the current fea-



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D
Tami Anderson, director of the Hartington Public Library in Hartington, Neb., stands next to Chris Holton's piece "Fragment of Installation #1," which is currently on display in the Arlo and Anne Wirth Art Gallery. The gallery is located in what used to be the upstairs of the Carnegie Library.

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