

Local artist considers relocating to U.S.

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

After more than 30 years of intensive painting, self-taught Windsor artist Paul Murray will be taking a sabbatical.

Murray, who dropped out of school in Grade 7 to pursue an art career, has been painting portraits since the age of 12.

His works are currently on display at a Kingsville gallery and Murray says after a break he may permanently set up residence in Tennessee.

"I have worked on major paintings these last couple years and I've tried to make them over the top," he said. "I think I've gotten there and it burns you out. I'm not stopping painting, just slowing down. I'm getting back out into the field and doing preliminary drawings."

Murray will be doing one more local major show this year before moving down south. He said the support in Windsor and Essex

County has been good, but the U.S. art market is bigger.

Much of his work is focused on painting Kentucky residents of the Appalachian Mountains, which translates better for American art collectors, he said.

Kathy Jaques, curator of the artist's galleries in both Kingsville and Tennessee, said the lease for the local location will be up in September.

At that time, a decision to renew the lease or close the gallery will be made.

The effort to attract new local buyers is becoming difficult, Jaques said.

She hopes there will be enough of an interest among the community to work to keep the gallery open.

"(Murray) has been exhibiting locally since he was 12 years old. We don't want him to disappear from Windsor," Jaques said.

Murray's career began gaining momentum in 1972 when he started selling



"Aunt Emily" by Paul Murray

more prints and original paintings.

From that time on, he has been working "seven days a week," usually doing two major paintings a year.

Despite having no formal art education, he has been referred to as "Canada's Rembrandt," and is celebrating his 40th birthday

this year.

His portraits are done in a variety of media, including pastels, watercolours and oil paints.

His works are currently being exhibited in the Museum of Art and History in Albuquerque, NM.

He opened the Kingsville gallery in 1994.

New specialist skills programs for high school students

The Ontario high school system is being transformed with new Specialist High Skills Majors that allow students to focus on the career path that matches their skills and interests, announced Bruce Crozier, MPP for Essex, last week.

This September, Specialist High Skills Majors, part of the regular Ontario Secondary School diploma, were launched as pilots by 26 school boards. The majors are tourism and hospitality, construction, primary industries, manufacturing and arts and culture.

At the Greater Essex County District School Board, a total of 64 students are enrolled in a pilot Specialist High Skills Majors program in 2006-07. The focus of the program is in the manufacturing sector with courses offered at General Amherst, Herman and Sandwich Secondary

Schools.

"The Specialist High Skills Majors program provides a unique opportunity for students to create a pathway that will lead them to the workplace, apprenticeship training, college or university," said Director of Education Mary Jean Gallagher. "Students in this program are not only acquiring essential skills, but also getting a chance to hone those skills through job shadowing and hands-on work experience."

Specialist High Skills Majors are a key component of the province's Student Success Strategy to give all students more relevant and high-quality learning opportunities so they continue their education until age 18 or graduation. The government's goal is to have 85 percent of high school students graduating by 2010-11.



DRIVING IN STYLE – Rob Clapper stands next to a 1993 Cadillac Allante convertible at the Canadian Transportation Museum Friday. Clapper's son Don won the \$20,000 vehicle in a raffle benefiting the Children's Education Program. About \$22,000 was raised for the program.

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