

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Kat Dakota's artwork, pictured here, is featured on the August issue of the Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association.

Courtesy photo

# Leelanau artist Kat Dakota's artwork featured on veterinary journal

By Meakalia Previch-Liu  
[mea@leelanaunews.com](mailto:mea@leelanaunews.com)

Readers can catch Leelanau artist Kat Dakota's artwork on

the cover of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association's (JAVMA) this month. The American Veterinary Medical Association is one of the

nation's leading advocates for veterinary care and medical advancement with distribution around the country.

Dakota, a commercial and fine

artist who specializes in oil painting, had one of her completed pet portraits, a commission from one of her customers, selected to be used on the August issue. The portrait depicting a dog named Nora looking up with adoring blue eyes was something Dakota made for her customer, Jennifer, however, another customer, Julie, originally suggested she submit her work for the JAVMA cover. While Dakota thought it was a longshot to be chosen, she submitted her work to the association anyway in hopes that someone would eventually contact her.

"I thought it was a great idea on Julie's part (to submit art), but I also thought it was a far shot because there's a lot of incredible artists across the nation that'll submit their artwork to be on the cover," Dakota said. "They (JAVMA) contacted me in February... I was totally excited, and I had decided to keep it a secret until I received copies of the issue, so I knew for seven months."

Just as pleasantly surprising it was to receive the news about the JAVMA cover, Dakota met the owner of Nora also in an unlikely way. She was originally doing pet portraits through the Pet Supply Plus store in Traverse City and collaborating with them. At the store, they were allowing customers to enter into a drawing to win a free pet portrait. Jennifer was one of those customers that won that drawing, and thus came about the painting of Nora.

"That was a great opportunity too, I'm just really blessed with

the opportunities that have come my way," she said. "I love animals, and one of my biggest natural highs is being able to meet people from all over the world because obviously with us being a tourist area, you meet so many people with different backgrounds."

The first person Dakota shared the news of the cover art with was her mom as she didn't tell her about this opportunity either. She said her mom was just as excited as her when she saw her work displayed on the journal.

"I gave her a copy with a note written on the cover thanking her for all of her support and Christian guidance," she said. "So my plan is to give it to some family, and I mailed one out to Jennifer who Nora belongs to... I've used the image of the painting of her dog on one of my signs and she was thrilled about that."

Dakota said the great thing about doing art work for people is she becomes friends with them in the process. Whether it's the love of dogs or art in general, Dakota said her and her customers have the best conversations.

"Often my customers will return just to see me even if they aren't local, and we'll look at current pictures of their dogs... it's really kind of a neat bond," she said. "I've always wanted people to see more than just the subject matter in my artwork, I wanted it to speak to them personally. No matter what I paint, whether it's landscape, waterscape, or portrait, I want it to resonate with the viewer."

(Continued on Page 2)

## Urban Sketchers workshop Sunday



Martha Elchert will facilitate an Urban Sketchers workshop Sunday in Leland. She is shown here sketching at the Acropolis in Greece.

Courtesy photo

By Amy Hubbell  
[amy@leelanaunews.com](mailto:amy@leelanaunews.com)

Years ago it wasn't unusual to see Michigan State University art students walking around Leland as part of MSU's summer art school, sketchbooks in hand.

Sunday will see a return of artists, walking and sketching their way through Fishtown, Leland Harbor, Main Street and the Old Art Building (OAB).

The OAB will host its first-ever urban sketching workshop, facilitated by Martha Elchert.

"It's not a class. It's an event to meet and draw on location," Elchert said.

While there is some overlap between plein air and urban sketching, the former tends to focus on the aesthetic outcome of the finished piece, whereas the latter's primary goal is on storytelling, witnessing, and recording, using any medium, indoors and outdoors.

Elchert is a longtime member of Urban Sketchers (USK), a global community of sketchers dedicated to the practice of on-location drawing. Their tagline is "Sharing our love for the places where we live and

(Continued on Page 2)

# Urban Sketchers

**Continued from Page 1**

travel—one drawing at a time.”  
 “Urban” sketching is a bit of a misnomer as it doesn’t have to take place in a city. It can be done in any environment, indoors or outdoors, in urban, rural, or natural areas.

Elchert, who is rarely without her sketch pad, has sketched while visiting Nice, France and San Antonio, Texas, among others.

“There’s a reporting aspect to it,” she said. “The sketches also document where we are in world history.”

Local sketchers will gather at the OAB Sunday at 11 a.m. and from there will head to the desig-

nated sites to capture what they see from direct observation. Sketchers use any kind of media to tell the story of their surroundings, the places they live, and where they travel.

Color is added with watercolor, colored pens or pencils.

They will spend the day sketching and will return to the OAB at 3 p.m. for a “throw down” when the artists can look at what they’ve drawn and talk about what they’ve produced.

Cost of the sketch event is \$15 which goes to the OAB.

Membership in USK is free.

“It costs nothing to join,” she said. “Once you’re a member you can connect with other artists from all over the world.” As of

December 2022, the non-profit organization USK, had 351 official chapters in over 60 countries and 374 cities. In 2021, USK added 25 new chapters across 11 countries and five continents.

Elchert is among several artists working to establish a Traverse City chapter of Urban Sketchers which would include Grand Traverse, Benzie, Antrim and Leelanau counties.

More information about the local effort is available at usk-grandtraverse@gmail.com or Urban Sketchers Traverse City on Facebook.

*Editor’s note: Martha Elchert is the wife of Enterprise parent company Blackbird LLC COO John Elchert.*



Martha Elchert sketches The Windmills on the Greek island of Mykonos. Courtesy photo

## Kat Dakota’s artwork

**Continued from Page 1**

Although she previously tried digital painting, the first time Dakota painted hands-on was only about five years ago when she took an art workshop in Frankfort. The class then triggered her interest in picking up a brush and finding her love for painting in general as a career. Following her love of both art and animals, Dakota’s first two pet portraits would also be of her dogs, Bo and Schatze. Both have passed, but their portraits are still hanging up in the studio till this day.

“Dogs have always been my favorite pet. They keep the world sane,” she said. “You just look at them and hug them and everything is okay... I believe I found the gifts God intended me to polish and develop, and it took awhile for me to get to this point, but I thank him for all the blessings that come my way and I just pray I continue on the path he’s planned for me.”

Dakota is still accepting commissions for artwork, whether

requests be of pets, wildlife, landscapes, or children and adult portraits. In the last few years, Dakota has sold paintings at each plein air event she’s attended, including winning second place at the 2023 Gene Rantz Memorial Plein Air Paint Out in Northport. The many art-themed events throughout the county not only keep her busy, but also keep her engaged and learning more about the different work completed by other talented artists.

“There’s a lot of giving artists out there that want to share the wisdom of what they learned, so through all the local artists and through some wonderful online art networks, I’ve been able to communicate with artists around the world and ask questions and we help each other,” she said. “If I’m not painting, I’m usually studying other people’s work.”

To meet or view Dakota in her element, her studio, Kat Dakota Art, is located at 307 N. Saint Joseph Street in Suttons Bay above Case Daniels, or visit her website at KatDakota.com to learn more.



The work of Empire artist Kent Wiejaczka is featured at the 77th annual Michigan Watercolor Society exhibit at the Dennon Museum in Traverse City. His painting, titled “Winter at North Bar Lake” was awarded the “International Society of Experimental Artists.” The exhibit runs through Sept. 1.

## Mental health program slated

Leland Township Public Library is proud to host Dr. Joanna Quigley as part of its Leland Library Summinars series, Aug. 20.

Quigley will deliver an important talk on the current state of youth mental health and strategies for supporting young people.

Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in anxiety and depression levels among American adolescents.

Quigley’s presentation will explore this pressing issue and provide insights on how we can support youth facing mental health challenges.

Attendees are welcome to bring questions.

Quigley is a distinguished Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist with extensive experience in youth mental health.

She serves as a Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Michigan.



QUIGLEY

Quigley is a part of the Michigan Child Collaborative Care (MC3) project and trained in pediatrics, general psychiatry, and child and adolescent psychiatry.

This 10 a.m. event is free and open to the public. For more information, please visit [www.lelandlibrary.org](http://www.lelandlibrary.org) or call the Leland Library at 256-9152.

## GREAT LAKES HUMANE SOCIETY

2nd

### Presents Annual Summer Festival

“There’s No Place Like Home”

Silent Auction & Raffle  
FABULOUS PRIZES!!

Saturday, August 17

12-3 PM

Location: 7246 Harrys Rd.  
Traverse City, 49684

Amazing Donors!

LIVE Dixieland Music by

The Back Room Gang

Please Leave Pets at Home

Entry Fee \$5

Each Entrant receives 5 tickets for games or food!

Under 6 yrs. FREE!

OUR GENEROUS SPONSOR

Meet our available Dogs and Cats!

## STAY UP TO DATE WITH LEELANAU COUNTY NEWS

by subscribing to the Leelanau Enterprise 231.256.9827

subscriptions@leelanaunews.com