

Travels inspire Oldham County artist Barry's equine scenes

**She will join more than
100 artists at 'Arts on the Green'**

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LA GRANGE, Ky. – In her 24-year career as a U.S. Secret Service agent, Karen Barry has experienced many adventures and suspenseful moments. Her biggest challenge now is to free her imagination to create her one-of-a-kind equestrian artwork. Barry prefers to work in two different mediums, oils and colored pencils. She likes oils because of their flexibility; mistakes can be corrected and if she doesn't like the outcome, she can change it without beginning the piece all over.

Barry, 55, enjoys the details of colored pencils. "I love to sketch and see the progress get more dimensional. There is a lot of layering in colored pencils. You have to see through the colors you apply to see the colors in the finished piece."

She also draws pets and other wildlife, seascapes and mountain scenery. She travels a lot and has been to Colorado to paint and sketch elk. Another favorite destination for artwork ideas is Bermuda.

Barry will be one of 115 artists participating in the "Arts on the Green" juried art show, June 7-8 at the Oldham County Courthouse Square. Artists will have their work for sale, in addition to contests for children, food vendors and numerous prize drawings.

"We actually had to turn away 20 to 25 artists this year," said Marion Gibson, event chair. Gibson is past president of the Arts Association of Oldham County, the entity that sponsors this art show.



Photo provided

Karen Barry specializes in equestrian art, such as this oil painting of "Roo." She also creates artwork in colored pencil.

“We’ve tried to keep a nice balance and high level of art,” said Gibson.

Gibson said she is encouraging people to come to La Grange for a day and take time to visit the other attractions in the county. A Garden Sculpture and Art Show and Sale will be taking place at Yew Dell Gardens in Crestwood the same weekend, and the Farmer’s Market will open up for the season on Third Street on June 7.

As a participating artist for the fourth year in a row, Barry likes the fact that “it’s not as large (as other shows). It has grown every year, but is still manageable.” She likes visiting with fellow artists, the public and knowing that the show is close to home for her. Barry lives on a farm and has been a resident of Oldham County since 1996. She had moved to the area after a promotion by the Secret Service to the Louisville Field Office. Upon retiring in 2000, she decided she would seek professional art training.

Having had some art instruction in college, Barry did not follow through with it but went on to teach for a year. She then laid aside her artistic desires to join the Secret Service. Since retiring, Barry has taken oil painting classes from La Grange art instructor Angie Campbell. She has also taken workshops conducted by Vera Curnow of Rising Sun, Ind., and Cecile Baird, founders of the Colored Pencil Society of America. Established in 1990, the society has more than 1,600 members and represents 16 countries.

Originally from Davidsonville, Md., Barry didn’t own her own horse until 1976, the year she began her career with the Secret Service. This horse stuck with her through all of her job transfers, until he died in 2006.

“I ride all of the time,” said Barry. As part of her Secret Service education, Barry was trained to be a horse agent. She was one of former President Ronald Reagan’s horse agents.

Barry is still employed part-time by the Secret Service and will be in Beijing, China, this year for the Olympics. Barry created Bridlespur Art in 2006. Examples of her artwork and additional information can be found online at www.bridlespurart.com or by contacting her at (502) 225-0535.

• For more information on Arts on the Green, contact Marion Gibson at (502) 338-4391 or visit: www.artsassociationofoldhamcounty.org.