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Wednesday, March 11, 2015



# Decorative painters celebrate 20 years

Local chapter teaches, gives back to community

By Jesse Yeatman Staff Writer

For two decades the Southern Maryland Decorative Painters have been expounding their art form through monthly activities, fundraisers and shows.

Debbie Blair Williams was scouring papers and magazines for a painting class when she eventually found about the National Society of Tole and Decorative Painters, which has since become the Society of Decorative Painters.

The first organizational meeting for the local chapter was in January 1995. The group formally adopted its name in June of that year after its chapter was approved by the national organization.

"There are all kinds of people in it," she said, including professional artists and craft designers as well as people who simply paint as a hobby.

Members pay local chapter and national dues, and gain access to online resources and a subscription to a decorative painting magazine, Williams said.

Williams started designing some of the painting projects (think of the simple follow-the-rules projects from arts and crafts stores) for the group within a year or so of forming the Southern Maryland chapter.

"It was just a natural thing, once I started getting involved," she said.

The group does community outreach projects, including decorating ornaments for a Christmas tree to sell at hospice fundraisers each season.

"If people come to us and ask for help, we usually say yes," Williams said.

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They've also created patriotic snowmen ornaments for the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, as well as decorated rocks in a memorial garden at the facility.

Other community service projects have included donated materials to a local women's shelter, sewing and painting comfort hats for women and children undergoing chemotherapy, donating craft books and painting magazines to senior centers and nursing homes, making plaques for the Red Cross and painting crab knockers for a hospital fundraiser.

The group's biggest project involved working with the Charles County Arts Alliance in 2008 to paint 304 small carousel horses, which were made into music boxes and sold to commemorate the 350th anniversary of Charles

County's founding.

"It's been a life saver for me," Williams said, adding that working with the group helped her get through some hard times.



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Williams said it is the mission of the group to promote decorative painting, which has a history stretching back centuries. Membership of the chapter during the last two decades has ranged from 32 to 63. There are currently about four dozen members.

"Decorative painting means painting on absolutely anything," Williams said, adding that it evolved from a colonial technique of painting on household items, especially tin. It includes techniques such as stenciling, faux finishing, gold leafing, country painting and graining.

The chapter occasionally hosts field trips to view art-rich locales around the region.

The group also sponsors art seminars, featuring techniques like acrylics, oils, colored pencil, and pen and ink, and hosts an annual show in the Charlotte Hall library for visitors to view artwork created by its members and cast votes for their favorites.

The members host a paint-in each month, usually at the Charlotte Hall library. Every other month they pick a shorter project to make time for a general meeting of the chapter, Williams said.

Williams led the first paint-in, which involved a basic marbling technique in April 1995. Since that time, members and their guests have participated in 187 paint-ins, according to a history of the group written by Roberta Perry, current chapter president.

Perry wrote that as the group celebrates its past 20 years, members must continue to carry on the legacy and "vow to keep the original flame burning bright."

The group's next meeting is on Saturday, March 28, at noon at the Charlotte Hall library. For more information about the Southern Maryland Decorative Painters, email [president@smdpaint.org](mailto:president@smdpaint.org) or visit [www.smdpaint.org](http://www.smdpaint.org).

#### Hunt for eggs and more at Easter festival

An Easter Egg Festival this season will feature egg hunts, photos with the Easter Bunny, amusement rides, live entertainment, free arts and crafts, an egg decorating contest and face painting, and more. Hosted by the St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks, the event will be on Saturday, March 28, from noon to 4 p.m. at the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds.

For a \$5 fee attendees can take part in the egg hunt, have their photo taken with Mr. or Mrs. Bunny, and participate in the recreational activities. Additional fees apply for amusement rides and food.

Advance tickets are available at the recreation and parks main office Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Raffle tickets can also be purchased ahead of time at a special promotion of two for the price of one. Space is still available for local vendors.

Proceeds from the Easter Egg Festival are used to fund the Recreation and Parks Scholarship Program, which provides qualified applicants the opportunity to participate in an activity at a 50 percent prorated amount of the registration fee. For more information, visit [www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/easter](http://www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/easter) or call 301-475-4200, ext. 1800.

#### League of Women Voters to meet with commissioners

On Thursday evening, March 12, the League of Women Voters of St. Mary's County will host the county commissioners for an informational meeting in the Lexington Park library's meeting room, beginning at 7 p.m. The annual meeting allows the league to identify venues for study. When completed, the results of such league studies are presented free to the community for consideration in public forums. Members of the community are invited to attend the March 12 meeting to learn about the intended general direction of the current county commissioners.

#### Leasing workshop open to farmland owners and farmers

Farmers and land owners in Southern Maryland may learn more about agricultural land-leasing issues at a workshop on Monday, March 16, from 5 to 9 p.m. at the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative auditorium at 15035 Burnt Store Road in Hughesville.

The leasing workshop will help landlords and tenants better understand the agricultural farmland leasing process, the communication and dispute resolution process and how to find and market available farmland. Workshop topics will focus on legal issues related to developing a lease, tools that exist to aid in writing a lease and setting up a rental range, agricultural conflict resolution services available in Maryland, communicating with the other party, and an introduction to Maryland's FarmLink Program.

The workshop is sponsored by Agriculture Law Education Initiative, University of Maryland Extension, Maryland Department of Agriculture, and Maryland FarmLink and funding is provided by USDA-NIFA and the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center.

An \$11 fee includes all materials and a locally sourced light dinner. To register and for information, call SMADC staff on 301-274-1922, ext. 1, or visit the news and announcements page at [www.smadc.com](http://www.smadc.com).

#### Health fair for families to be held

The St. Mary's public schools' Head Start Health and Wellness Fair will be held on March 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Dr.

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