

## **Silent auction of artwork focusing on pets to benefit humane society**

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*By MEA ANDREWS of the Missoulian*

Missoula teacher and photographer Allen Hay doesn't mind the 13-letter truth: 8-year-old Libby and 6-year-old Toby are spoiled rotten.

But they've stolen his heart. The two yellow Labs get their own sitter when the Hays leave town; they get to go hunting with him; and their energetic joy of living is an everyday joy for the Hay family.

"They are the kinds of dogs almost anyone who loves dogs would love to have," he says.

Libby and Toby are stars this month, featured in various photographs in "Art for the Sake of Pets," a silent auction of artwork that celebrates animals and benefits the rescue efforts of the Humane Society of Western Montana.

Nearly 50 works will be auctioned off, with final bidding during the closing reception on Nov. 18.

Missoula lawyer Matt Thiel, who helped organize the event, said the show is a tribute to animal companions everywhere who become imbedded in our homes and lives.

"They live in such proximity to us, provide us with a lot of support, lend us their ear," he said. "People who do really love their pets try to involve them in every aspect of their lives."

Thiel, a board member for the Humane Society, is an artist too, and some of his work is included in the auction. Anna, his 5-year-old corgi, and Turbo, his 9-year-old long-hair dachshund, often are models for his painting.

The show includes work by both well-known Missoula artists (Janet McGahon, Nancy Erickson and Monte Dolack, to name a few) and emerging artists. Horses, cats, rabbits, a donkey and dogs of all shapes and colors make appearances. Gallery owner Dudley Dana's mixed-media piece features a regular gallery greeter, his black Lab Gibbon.

Some of the work is realistic (Stephanie Frostad's "Kinship" trio of horses and rabbits, for instance), some whimsical (Jill Logan's "Rainbow Dalmatian"), some abstract (Bob Phinney's Klee/Picasso-inspired jumbles of paws, noses, torsos and legs).

And colorful. Seattle artist Shai Steiner is known for her happy portraits of family pets and random animals, turned out in pop-star 1960s boldness from black-and-white photos she takes.

“I try to go for the special expression that's theirs,” said Steiner, who plans to visit Missoula for the auction finale on Nov. 18. “They're curious about you, or they want to play with you, or they're a little worried.” Her own horse Momo is featured in one of the pieces in the Missoula show.

Photographs, drawings, acrylics, oils, cast-bronze dog bookends by Joe Halko, and ceramic “Kitty Kitty” salt-and-pepper shakers by Mary Gilmore are a few of the offerings. Opening bids range from under \$50 to more than \$1,000.

Bids may be left all week, but attend the closing reception to ensure a successful purchase. On hot items, the auction's closing of 8 p.m. may be “soft,” to encourage the most for the Humane Society.

“We were going to be happy with 20 works this first year. We got 46,” said Tracey Perkins, manager of the Dana Gallery, who helped secure the work. “We liked everything that people sent us; it's very high quality.”

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### **Picture the pets**

“Art for the Sake of Pets,” a silent-auction fundraiser for the Humane Society of Western Montana, is at the Dana Gallery, 246 N. Higgins Ave. The opening reception is 6-8 p.m. Friday. The closing reception and final bids will be from 6-8 p.m. Nov. 18. Artists are donating between 50 to 100 percent of final price; a small percentage goes to the gallery to cover costs.