

Artists Aaron Horrell and Barb Bailey to be Featured on Close Up Radio

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Aaron Horrell, self-taught artist and military veteran, is the founder and owner of Painted Wren Gallery, a charming art gallery selling original vibrant paintings, enchanted children's books, multicolored pottery, goat milk soaps, and cozy patchwork quilts, among other artistic pieces all designed by southeast Missouri artists. Manager Barb Bailey joined his business after meeting Aaron while she was selling soaps at an art studio across the hall from his gallery. Eight years later they create and self-publish children's books filled with endearing, quirky, fun-loving characters and colorful illustrations that light up the hearts of young enthusiastic readers. Aaron and Barb have written 15 books so far filled with lively colorful illustrations and unique characters they create and share with the world.



"Most of the art Barb and I work on together are the illustrations for our children's books and you can't tell what part I painted or what part she worked on but we developed a certain style while working simultaneously and the important thing is that it all comes together nicely. No matter what the illustration everything needs to look cohesive," says Aaron.

From the time he was a young teenager Aaron knew he wanted to be an artist. Growing up on a farm in rural southeast Missouri he spent much of his time painting lovely picturesque landscapes. Although his father was disappointed at first with his career path, Aaron ultimately won him over with his numerous awards in art competitions. After graduating high school in 1970, Aaron eagerly applied to the Cincinnati Art Institute. While they admired his art, he was ultimately rejected simply because there were only 15 students in his graduating class. His

response was to send them a letter stating, "if you live long enough you might hear from me." He was determined not to let that one small obstacle get in the way of his dreams. He joined the US Navy and spent most of his free time creating wall murals. After 4 years in the military, Aaron became a bricklayer but quit soon after due to a severe back injury. During all this time, he never lost his passion and enthusiasm for painting.

"The fact that I never stopped painting means that I am an artist and I continue to create whether it's one style or another. I believe that to be an artist it has to be inside you. You can't do it to please someone else; you have to please yourself. I want to be creative and each painting to be my sole creation," says Aaron.

Aaron possesses a truly unique artistic style and endearingly refers to his surreal paintings as "celebrations of life" depicting animals entangled together in surprising ways. His admirers have compared his art to the famous impressionist painters Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh. His favorite artist though is Russian French modernist Marc Chagall. Aaron greatly admires Chagall's vibrant colors and candid use of juxtaposition and protruding angles depicting such things as upside-down goats being milked by inverted maidens. Aaron is amazed by Chagall's work and vaguely emulates his style in his own way. He wants his paintings to invoke thoughts about what he is doing and not just be a pretty picture to admire on a wall.



PAINTED WREN ART GALLERY



"One of the things that really bothers me as an artist is when people ask me to paint an exact

replica of their puppy or cat and I tell them if you want to capture their exact features then please take a picture. But if you want an actual painting then I can do that for you. I can paint my aunt and it would closely resemble her but that puts me in a box where I would be satisfying someone else with what I do and that's not where I want to be with my art," states Aaron.

He opened an art gallery and soon afterward met Barb who was a great admirer of his paintings. Barb, whose favorite class in school was art and who learned to crochet when she was just 10 years old, had asked Aaron to teach her to paint. Aaron wasn't sure he could be a teacher but was always interested in working with another aspiring artist. He advised her that when you paint what you feel, then you give it meaning and beauty so there is no such thing as a mistake.

"We own a true working art gallery because besides the lovely art we have on the walls we also have paint tubes and brushes on the table. Before we started working together, I watched Aaron paint often. He would point things out to me showing me what he was doing and how certain colors change in the shadows. I learned by watching Aaron paint. Now we never know what we're doing from day to day with what picture we're working on, but seeing how it develops into the final product is very cool and exciting," states Barb.

Aside from producing wondrous pieces of art for their gallery, Aaron and Barb love working together on children's books that realistically depict characters who come to life in their stories.



Aaron loves the idea of producing something that helps children grow up with a sense of joy and meaning. The kids enjoy reading while learning valuable life lessons and having a fun time.

"I feel a sense of accomplishment when we finish our paintings and put them all together in our children's books. Aaron and I will write the story first and plan out the paintings. Since I am the computer person at the gallery, I insert the pictures in the stories and we self-publish. Once the work is uploaded and all finished, it looks really cool and I'm always amazed at what we accomplished," states Barb.

Aaron truly feels the best way to learn to paint is to do so along with your teacher or mentor on the same canvas. This method of collaboration inspired Aaron and Barb to create a beautifully historic masterpiece for their home state of Missouri. Their proudest accomplishment by far is their stunning creation of the Missouri Bicentennial Mural, now located in the Harry S. Truman State Office Building in Jefferson City inside Harry's Place cafeteria. Standing an impressive 12 feet high and 30 feet wide, the mural is composed of thousands of 2-inch triangles, each painted by a different person. Resembling a patchwork quilt or stained glass, the project took 3 years to complete from its inception in 2018, due to the Pandemic and the restrictions that were imposed. This amazing creation was a community effort by the people of Missouri who may have never met one another. Visitors to Missouri from 17 countries and 30 states are represented on the mural. Because this mural was created in celebration of Missouri's 200th birthday, everyone was welcome to participate: men, women, and children of any age, ability, or background. Everyone who wanted to paint did so. It was a free project to ensure everyone had the opportunity to be a part of this memorable experience and that families could all participate together. Aaron and Barb believe this mural is a priceless masterpiece, painted by 16,116 people who worked together to make something important, unique, and beautiful. They are hoping for recognition in the Guinness Book of World Records for the most people to paint a single piece of artwork.

"I wanted to involve people in my art and it became their art, not mine," says Aaron.

Aaron and Barb loved how their fabulous Missouri Bicentennial Mural was able to connect thousands of people for an amazing cause. Finding a way to incorporate this idea of community artwork into everyday life in a way no other artist has done became Aaron's calling. He believes using other people's hands to create is a wonderful way of doing things while meeting new people along the way. This concept motivated Aaron to create Paint For A Cause, a fundraising opportunity benefiting specific charities while bringing members of the local community together. With Aaron and Barb's guidance, participants are invited together to paint on a large gray-scale canvas. Small brushes, no larger than ¼" wide, are dipped in paint by Aaron and Barb, who show their participants how and where to paint their 2-inch triangles. Since the murals are triangulated, the colors need to balance and closely match so that when it's all completed you can see the triangles on the mural. Participants donate \$1 for each triangle and once completed the money and mural are given to the selected charity. It is an absolutely wonderful endeavor to be able to contribute towards helping these very deserving organizations that do so much good

for the sick and needy in their communities.

Despite all their previous accomplishments, Paint For A Cause is their most important project near and dear to their hearts. They are extremely passionate about this project and how artwork has brought the community together to make lives happier and more fulfilling. To them, it is part of the world, designed for children and adults, an integral part of the human race, and a community connected by lovers of beauty and art. Their latest cause is the Mississippi Valley Therapeutic Horsemanship, which owns 12 very gentle horses offering therapeutic rides to special needs children. A 6-foot by 10-foot painting is being created that will be displayed in their lobby. So far over 500 people have participated and they are hoping to get thousands more to contribute.

"Paint For A Cause projects are special. We don't ever want to see it stop in our lifetime; I want to die with one in progress. It has to happen this way because it's too good a project to let go. I want this to be my lasting legacy. We have done at least 10 causes including the Missouri Bicentennial Mural and must continue to do them because art is important in people's lives. I want to do an even bigger mural than the previous one, a massive one for the United States, and see how many hands we can get to achieve this. It would be a glorious accomplishment," states Aaron.

Anyone who would consider sponsoring this project, please contact Aaron Horrell or Barb Baily. They have the experience and ability to paint a project this large and are seeking financial assistance to bring it to life.

Paint For A Cause needs to be recognized by the art world for the potential it has. It has become Aaron's life work and he wants nothing more than to see it thrive and prosper.

Close Up Radio will feature Aaron Horrell and Barbara Bailey on Tuesday November 15th at 11 a.m. EST with host Doug Llewelyn

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If you have any questions for our guest, please call (347) 996-3389

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