

Have a seat!

Library's 'Illustrated Chair' auction on Saturday features nearly 50 works created by area artists

Story by Arn Albertini

Photos by Paul Franz

The Friends of the Greenfield Public Library is hoping your love of art and the public library intertwine on Saturday, Nov. 4.

The Friends will be auctioning off chairs, stools and wheelbarrows designed by local artists to help raise money for the public library at a silent and live auction at Stoneleigh-Burnham School that its calling "Illustrated Chairs."

In addition to raising money, the project is another way to show a love for books and reading, said Ann Dillon, vice-president of The Friends.

"People forget how important illustrations are," she said. "Sometimes, they can make or break a book, especially a kids' book."

The Friends asked artists from around the Pioneer Valley to illustrate a chair based on their favorite book.

As a result, there is a chair with Emily Dickinson poems painted upon them and a secret compartment with more poems. There's another one that has comics from the comic strip Blondie, another covered in a map of the world representing "Around the World in 80 Days" and several chairs depicting scenes from classic tales like "Little Red Riding Hood," "The Cat and the Fiddle" and "The Wizard of Oz."

Deerfield artist Al Dray has contributed a chair with a Deerfield Academy theme. If somebody connected to the academy wins the auction, he will add the school's seal on the back. A similar chair he donated to the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association raised \$600.

In all, there are nearly 50 works of art created by area artists.

Among those who contributed is Robert Markey of Ashfield, who took a different approach. He chopped up his chair and built a sculpture out of the pieces.

"I preferred to do something more interesting to me," he said.

Markey cut the chair's legs in



Robert Markey of Ashfield chopped up his chair and built a sculpture.

half and used the slats of the chair to build a platform. The halved legs are the platform's four sides and the slats make up the base. He chopped up the seat and glued the pieces back together into one big chunk of wood, which he carved into an open book.

The pages of the book have a coat of light, almost clear paint, giving it the appearance of an old piece of paper and the binding of the book is a slightly darker shade of paint.

Thin brass rods, the only pieces not from the original chair, shoot out of the open pages to hold a yin-yang symbol. The symbol is made of shavings from carving the book.

The sculpture was inspired by "The Tao Te Ching," which outlines the basis of Taoism.

"It's one of my favorite pieces of literature," Markey said, adding that the book is also one of his greatest influences.

"A book of that magnitude is very hard to paraphrase," he said. "It's like the bible. It's a spiritual text."

Figuring out how to suspend the yin-yang symbol from the pages of the book was one of the hardest parts of the project, Markey said. "I had to think about it a lot."

He wanted the symbol to appear to be floating out of the book. "If I was doing this for a gallery, I probably would have suspended it on

wires from the ceiling."

But, since he was building a sculpture that was to be auctioned off, he had to take a different approach. "I tried to do it all with wood from the chair at first, but I just couldn't make it work," Markey said. He finally settled on brass rods. "When I tried it, I was very pleased. It almost looks like it has energy floating out of it."

Markey doesn't use the Greenfield Public Library all that often, but he is a frequent guest at his own public library in Ashfield, the Belding Memorial Library. "I am absolutely dependent on it, so I'm very, very supportive of libraries, in general," he said.

It's not the first time Markey has taken a unique approach to an assignment. Back in 2003, he took apart a violin and made the torso of a woman out of the pieces. His violin, along with 11 others, was auctioned off as a fundraiser for Pioneer Valley Symphony.

On Saturday, Nov. 4, Stoneleigh-Burnham School on Bernardston Road will host an informal dessert and cocktail party with silent and live auctions to bid on the chairs, wheelbarrows and stools. There will be a preview of the chairs from 3 to 5 p.m., followed by the auction from 5 to 7 p.m. Admission is \$15 and tickets are available at the library, the World Eye Bookshop and Wilson's Department Store.

Silent bidding has already started in a bid book that will be at the library until the auction for anybody who wants to bid ahead of time.

The money the Friends raises goes to books and materials, keeping the library open on Saturdays in the summer, paying the salary of a part-time volunteer coordinator and running various library programs. Last year, Friends gave the library \$24,000.

Saturday's event is one of several fundraising events the group organizes.

Staff reporter Arn Albertini has worked at The Recorder since 1999. He covers Greenfield. He can be reached at aalberti@recorder.com or (413)772-0261 Ext. 264.

Staff photographer Paul Franz has worked for The Recorder since 1988. He can be reached at pfranz@recorder.com or (413) 772-0261 Ext. 266.



"Emily Dickinson"
by Jane Chang of Amherst.



"How Mr. Edward Bear Grew Tubbier"
by David Sund of Greenfield.



"Hey Diddle Diddle"
by Jo-Ann Denehy of Whately.



"Flowers and Vines"
by Cheryl Rezendes of Bernardston.



"How Does Your Garden Grow"
by Pamela Roberts of Colrain.



"Starry Night"
by Sandra Denis of Charlemont.



"Wynken, Blynken and Nod"
by Marcia Wise of Deerfield.



"Cows"
by Kayla Bernard of Leyden.



"Around the World in 80 days"
by Hope Schnieder of Greenfield.



"The Snowy Day"
by Sarah Adam of Greenfield.

Until the auction on Saturday, Nov. 4, the chairs will be on display in Greenfield at the library, Wilson's Department Store, Opus, the Oak Shoppe, Greenfield Savings Bank, Taylor's Tavern, World Eye Bookshop and the former Joel McFadden Jewelry storefront.

Photographs of the chairs are

also on the library's Web site: www.greenfieldpubliclibrary.org

Participating artists include: Sarah Adam, Pam Adorno, Nancy Baker, Janet Barnum, Kayla Bernard, Regina Boron, Nancy Buchanan, Gail Callahan, John Chapin Jr., Jane Chang, Connie Corsiglia, Jo-Ann Denehy, Sandra Denis, Al Dray,

Frank Gregory, Gilette Griffin, Morgan Hale, Anne Hare, Mary Freeman Hernandez, Tom La Chance, Kay Lyons, Robert Markey, Jack Marmaras, Marcus and Janet McLaurin, Elice Davis Pieropan, Ami Polenski, Carol Reed, Cheryl Rezendes, Bill Roberts, Pam Roberts, Joan Rockwell, Lynne

Rudie, Peggy Sanders, Maureen Scanlon, Hope Schneider, Kate Schoenberger, Astrid Sheckels, JoAnne Sherburne, Martha Stiles, Grant Strange, David Sund, Nancy Uchman, Lauren Watrous, Beverly Whitbeck, Melinda Williams, Marcia Wise and the second-grade class at the Greenfield Center School.