

Neighbors

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Albion resident turns art into business gifts



A small portion of a mural designed by LaNoue in downtown Albion.

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For the Enquirer

ALBION — People may think of Christmas as the giving season, but local artist Maggie LaNoue recently discovered that businessmen need suitable gifts for clients all year long.

"I've had such a good response. It's very exciting," LaNoue said about her recently launched line of business gift items.

LaNoue, owner of Albion Design, has been portraying Michigan landmarks and nostalgic scenes for more than 25 years.

She also has contributed to many local projects, such as designer and project manager for the Albion Community Mural, which was launched last year on Superior Street.

In spite of that, "I thought maybe there's something else that can use my art," LaNoue said.

The idea of creating items suitable for business gifts came in October from a suggestion by clients at Dow-Corning, she said.

LaNoue took the concept and developed a line of Michigan business memorabilia including mugs, paperweights, stationery and ceramic plates, which she launched on a new Web site, michiganmugs.com. In two weeks time, she produced 144 mugs in two designs — of the Mackinac Bridge and the State Capitol.

LaNoue is a native of Washington, D.C., and studied art at the Corcoran Gallery of Art there. However, she has lived in Albion for many years, raising two children here after graduating with a visual arts degree from Albion College.

The purpose of most of her work is to promote the community, county and state through art, and the new business gifts really tie into that, LaNoue said.

"A lot of people need personalized gifts or something that is memorable of their time here. It seems natural to be able to promote Michigan this way," she said. "It's small and not very expensive, and it fits in a suitcase."

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy this year added LaNoue's paperweights as a gift to clients, although it has sent Christmas cards designed by her for the past three years, said Pat Vintevoghel, executive assistant to the conservancy president.

"The Christmas cards have just been amazing," Vintevoghel said.

The cards have familiar landmarks such as the Belle Isle Bridge, lighthouse and carousel and are numbered so clients can collect them, Vintevoghel said.

The paperweight adds to that collection, designed



PHOTOS BY JOHN GRAP/THE ENQUIRER

Albion designer Maggie LaNoue has launched a new business to promote Michigan with porcelain plates, paperweights and mugs featuring two designs, the Mackinac Bridge and the State Capitol.

MORE ABOUT MAGGIE

Some of Maggie LaNoue's favorite subjects for artwork include: Old barns, harbors, old cars, old-fashioned bicyclists, nostalgia, nature and skiing. Her style uses a variety of line widths, with attention to detail, perspective and layout.

Her custom art of Michigan's Centennial Businesses toured Michigan during the Michigan Sesquicentennial Celebration.

Maggie's recent custom art and card clients include: Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, Southern Michigan Bank and Trust, Dawn Food Products, Inc., Falco, Felpausch Food Centers, Albion College and A.M. Todd.

For more information, visit albiondesign.com



A close-up of the artwork on one of the mugs.

Washington Square in Lansing.

The new mugs are getting a good response from customers, said Michiganiana store manager Alice Foster-Stocum.

"I have people who buy mugs and put candy or little items in them and give them as thank-you gifts," Stocum said.

with a drawing of a water creature from the carousel, she said.

The mugs retail for \$10 and were introduced for the Christmas shopping season at Books and More at 119 N. Superior Street in Albion and at Michiganiana, www.michiganiana.com, whose main store is at 100 S.