

# **iN** **m**urrysville

Winter 2007

**COMMUNITY MAGAZINE**

Serving the Residents of Murrysville, Delmont and Export



**IN Murrysville** is a non-partisan community magazine dedicated to representing, encouraging and promoting the Murrysville area by focusing on the talents and gifts of the people who live and work here. Our goal is to provide readers with the most informative and professional regional publication in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**IN Murrysville** magazine is made possible through the partnerships with the Municipality of Murrysville, the Murrysville Economic and Community Development Corporation, the Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce, the Franklin Regional School District and **IN Murrysville, Inc.**

**PUBLISHER**

Wayne Dollard  
wayne@dollardpublishing.com

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Mark Berton  
mark@dollardpublishing.com

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Elaine Petrakis  
Elaine Petrakis Photography  
(724) 325-1117

**WEB DEVELOPMENT**

Shane and Marianne Rolin/Amixa

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Kickit Communications

**CONTRIBUTORS**

John Barrett	Jenna Gwyn
Mark Berton	Kara Kessler
Karen Cadwell	Marlene Maninske
John Cardwell	Dianne Rigby
Safdar Chaudhary, MD	Jane Roberts
Michele Clarke	Tom Sochacki
Dr. Emery D'Arcangelo	Mayor Joyce Somers
Lisa Giacchino	Denise Sticha
Barb Glozik	Kelly Thomas

**ADVERTISING**

Each issue of **IN Murrysville** is mailed to every household in Murrysville, Delmont and Export, and reaches over 36,000 potential customers. To advertise, contact:

David Mitchell (724) 733-4200  
david@dollardpublishing.com

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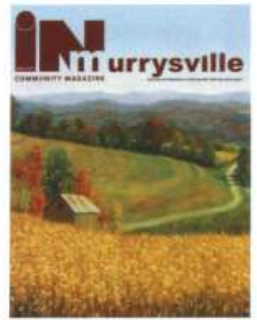
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On The Cover:  
"Westmoreland Harvest"  
by Bob Bickers.



**GET ROLLING FOR THE 2007-08 SNOWMAN CONTEST**

For ages 4 - 12.  
Participants must be residents of Murrysville; deadline is March 31, at 5 p.m. See page 8 for details!



Above: Celebrating the grand opening of InkCredibles.

# MASTERPIECE

Story by Barb Glozik



Above: "Westmoreland Harvest" by Bob Bickers.

The editors of Webster's dictionary may not use a picture of Bob Bickers to illustrate the term "renaissance man", but they could. That's because the local lawyer and artist dabbles in everything from painting portraits to trying civil cases to collecting old cameras. Bob grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, where, among other things, he practiced law with his father. So, how did he end up in Murrysville? Quite simply, love and marriage. Bob first met his wife and current law partner, Diane, at a conference for Nationwide Insurance employees, and their friendship eventually grew into something more. After they both left Nationwide, Bob moved to this area to be near Diane, who is originally from Churchill. The two married 14 years ago and, when Diane's law practice grew too large for one person to handle, Bob joined her to establish Bickers and Bickers. When people see their firm's name, they naturally think the Bickers specialize in divorce, but that's one of the few forms of civil law that the couple do not litigate.

Artistic talent apparently runs in the family. Bob tells a fascinating story about his dad, who also dabbled in oil paints. When he lost an arm, the senior Bickers was forced to learn to write, paint, and do everything else with his other hand. His painting suffered, but he found an artistic outlet in calligraphy. Bob has four children, all of whom display some artistic flare. His daughter Beth and son Bradley, both from his first marriage, live in Tennessee. Beth is a graphic artist and Bradley plays football for his high school in the Volunteer State. Diane's daughter, Jessica, is a senior at Franklin Regional High School. Their daughter, Alyssa, is an eighth grader at Franklin Regional Middle School.

Bob said his art helps relieve the stress of working 60-hour weeks. Painting and photography calm him and help him focus his mind. They also sometimes help him win cases. He has used his talents to draw realistic depictions of accident scenes that resulted in wins for his clients.

Bob credits television artist Bill Alexander for inspiring him to work in oils. He prefers working in alkaline paints because they dry faster than oils. He dislikes working in watercolors because the results are too watery and too easily damaged. Bob's art is influenced by the work of western and landscape artists Howard Terpning, Richard Schmid, Clyde Aspevig, Cyrus Asfary, and Wilson Hurley, who, like Bob, is also a lawyer.

There's more to Bob than art, though. He also enjoys archeology, architecture, working around the house and garden, reading, and collecting old cameras and space aliens. No, he doesn't have the bodies of the victims of the alleged UFO crash in Roswell, New Mexico, stashed in his attic, but he does have a variety of figurines depicting aliens and other

fanciful figures. All of these interests are reflected in his art.

There's probably no better day to meet a fellow space enthusiast than on the 50th Anniversary of the launch of Sputnik. A product of the US-USSR space race, Bob has always been interested in space exploration. He uses that interest as an artistic launching pad. His childhood dream of flying in space may not come true, but he can take flight with his art. Bob is one of a handful of space artists who draw more realistic depictions of alien landscapes. His work, based on NASA photos taken by astronauts and robotic explorers, highlights the subtle differences in the lighting and colors of subjects such as the Martian landscape. He says that



“too many other artists rely on computer animations or renderings” which, in his opinion, lack the impact of a well-done painting. Bob names Apollo 12 astronaut Alan Bean as his favorite contemporary space artist. In fact, Bob wanted to be an astronaut when he was growing up, but changed his mind after NASA abandoned the Apollo moon missions, and he learned the realities of internal NASA politics. But Bob still feels NASA could benefit by sending an artistically inclined astronaut on a mission. He believes having an artist in space would help NASA and its international partners increase public interest in the program. An artist, unlike a scientist or military person, expresses what he sees and hears with words or images that stir the soul.

Bob also draws landscapes, portraits, and Native American artifacts. In addition, he’s an avid and talented photographer who is as comfortable behind the lens as he is in front of an easel. Landscape subjects include the western Pennsylvania countryside and highlight the gently rolling, forested hills and farmland. In striking contrast to the greens of these photos are those of the western U.S., primarily the desert and mountains, in all their rocky splendor. His favorite subjects here seem to be the Painted Desert and the Grand Canyon.

Bob’s work was recently featured at the Undercroft Gallery at the First Unitarian Church in Shadyside. The show, “East Meets West”, was a study in the contrasts between the lush greens of the Western Pennsylvania countryside and the stark beauty of the Grand Canyon and the American Southwest. My favorite works were two photographs, “Jaws That Never Chew” and “Acuna”. Both showed Bob’s ability to capture color and movement with his camera. In the brochure for the show, Bob said that the agave plant in the first photo reminded him of teeth. Frankly, I didn’t see it, but I did see the way his lens and framing of the image captured the upward motion of the thorns. The street scene in Acuna, Mexico, captured the color and vibrancy of the lunchtime crowd. Looking at it, I could almost hear the car horns honking and vendors shouting as people rush to grab a quick bite.

His interest in Native American artifacts dates to his time in Tennessee where he was fascinated by the Indian mounds near Memphis. He says that he visited as many as he could, especially those with museums. In fact, one of Bob’s good friends, Dan Amick, is now an archeology professor at Loyola University in Chicago and conducts digs in the U.S. southwest. Bob thinks Dan may have picked up the archeology bug from him.

Bob was always good at drafting, a skill he uses to this day in some cases, and said he seriously considered a career as an architect. One of the things he loves about the Pittsburgh area is its diversity. People from all over the world settled here and brought their country’s architectural styles with them. He points to the presence of a Buddhist temple, a Hindu temple, a mosque, a synagogue, and a variety of church styles all within a few miles of his home in Murrysville as an example of this diversity. He also enjoys working in the different courthouses in the regions, especially the Greensburg courthouse, which he rates as one of the most beautiful anywhere. Even the barns in the surrounding countryside fascinate him. They are larger and more complex than those he saw in the South. And, of course, he has an engineer’s appreciation for the many bridges that are a signature feature of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

A member of the East Suburban Artists League, Bob has shown his work all over the area and has won prizes for it, including first place in the 2006 Murrysville Community Day Art Show. But, he’s decided to step back from contests for the time being and concentrate on portrait work. Bob is also redoing his website. Once he’s finished, all of his art will be just a mouse-click away.

## PENNDOT Reminds Murrysville Motorists About Deer

Fewer daylight hours and the increased movement of deer can mean a greater risk of collisions between the woodland creatures and vehicles. Last year in Pennsylvania, 11 people were killed in 2,701 reported collisions between vehicles and deer.

To help decrease your chances of hitting a deer, PennDOT offers the following tips:

- Stay alert for deer darting across the road, especially during the early morning and evening hours when deer are most active.
- Reduce your speed in heavily-wooded areas.
- Watch for other deer after one crosses the road – deer often travel in groups and frequently there will be several deer crossing at once.
- Pay attention to “Deer Crossing” signs and reduce your speed accordingly.
- If you see a deer, slow down, tap your brakes to warn other drivers and sound your horn. Deer tend to fixate on headlights, so flashing them may cause the animal to move.
- Always obey the speed limit and always wear your seat belt. If your vehicle is involved in an accident, you’re less likely to get hurt or killed if you’re buckled up.

