

"In the history of Italy and the arts, there have been plagues. We would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge and understand that these things are going to happen... we can bring comfort of the arts -- from the arts -- to our community." Pat Beréskin, proud owner of Beréskin Art Gallery, has dedicated her whole life to the arts and used them to accept every bend in the trail brought her way -- especially in this past year.

Born and raised in Bettendorf with strong Italian roots, Beréskin has long understood the power of art. When asked when she knew what she wanted to do with her life, she fondly answered, "I was four or five and I was looking out, and I could see really far. I could see far down our street and all the way down to the creek -- that was Duck Creek -- and a male deer with a huge crown came out of the water and stood there and looked at me... at that minute I knew I was going to be an artist."

Not only did Beréskin become an artist, but she became what many believe a wonderful teacher too. Formerly, she taught classes to children in elementary through high school in her own home, but now she owns her own art gallery and studio here in her home town where she can help nurture young artists. She goes in to work at 7 in the morning and remains most nights until 8 p.m.

When COVID hit the ground running in the United States, Beréskin knew she had to work with this chapter instead of

letting it win. She couldn't let it keep her students from creating, and she was up for the challenge; as she likes to say, "teaching is not for the faint of heart." "Because of my family in Italy, I was very aware of what was going on in Europe [in early February]. Both of my family members are doctors, and they warned me because in the U.S. we were not prepared."

She used that knowledge to her advantage and prepared herself and her students for this time. She began utilizing temperature checks, having all students remove their shoes and sanitizing every open surface.

Additionally, before classes could resume in person again, she created a major online presence for her students not only in the Quad Cities but artists across the country and the world.

Beréskin was able to spread her love of art in completely unprecedented ways that likely wouldn't have been possible without this bump in the road.

It is clear that in embracing this time instead of loathing it, Beréskin truly knows how to appreciate life's beauty. "This is my mission -- this is my life... my job is to leave this world more beautiful and to raise the next generation of artists!" When asked what lies in store for her and her wonderful local business, she paused, audibly smiled, and responded, "HOPE is where I'm going."



Painting a positive picture

by Caroline Sierk

Beréskin Art Gallery