

Self-taught artist helping inspire others

Sideen shares his passion through classes, 'Learn to Draw' books

St. Boniface

St. Vital

BY ARIELLE GODBOUT

STAFF REPORTER

arielle.godbout@canstarnews.com

It was more than 10 years ago that Al Sideen picked up a pencil and changed his life — discovering a passion and talent for drawing.

Now, the St. Boniface-based Sideen helps others to discover their own love for art by teaching night classes. He also has written a series of books to teach children as young as three to draw.

"I told the students last night that they're probably the luckiest students in all of Winnipeg, because they're doing something they've always wanted to do," Sideen said, when asked why he loves to teach.

"You catch them in that 'ah' moment. 'Ah, now I know what you mean,' and 'OK, now I got it!'"

Sideen said his own 'ah' moment came in 1998, when he was living in Saskatchewan, with no set career path and working "nickel and dime" jobs to pay the bills.

One Friday night, he decided to give himself half an hour to do whatever he wanted, and picked up a drawing pencil — something he hadn't done since Grade 2.

Three hours later, pencil still in hand, he realized that art was his true calling.

After moving to Winnipeg a few months later, Sideen continued to develop his drawing skills.

While he has a non-art related day job, Sideen's passion has also led him to teach night classes.

He currently teaches at Collège Jeanne-Sauvé in St. Vital with the Louis Riel School Division's continuing education program, and at Sturgeon Heights Collegiate through the continuing education program with the St. James-Assiniboia School Division.

Jan Laidlaw, a facilitator with Louis

Riel's program, said Sideen's classes have always proved popular.

"Some people are afraid to draw," she said, explaining that Sideen has a knack for making people feel comfortable.

"He seems to really demystify the drawing process."

And while Sideen said he loves his night classes, his pet project is the drawing books — now in their third incarnation.

He said the books were born from his desire that no other child should have to grow up without exploring their love of drawing, like he did.

"They can start to develop at that age. They're not looking for perfection, they're just doodling," he said.

"It's just to really enjoy themselves, giggle a lot, laugh at themselves — seeing what they can do and get their imagination going."

The drawing books, available for four different age groups, are available at Toad Hall Toys (54 Arthur St.), Artists Emporium (1610 St. James St.), and the Children's Museum at The Forks.



Photo by Arielle Godbout

Al Sideen shows off his collection of Learn to Draw books for kids.

For more information, visit www.alan-sideen.com.

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