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Artist comes full circle

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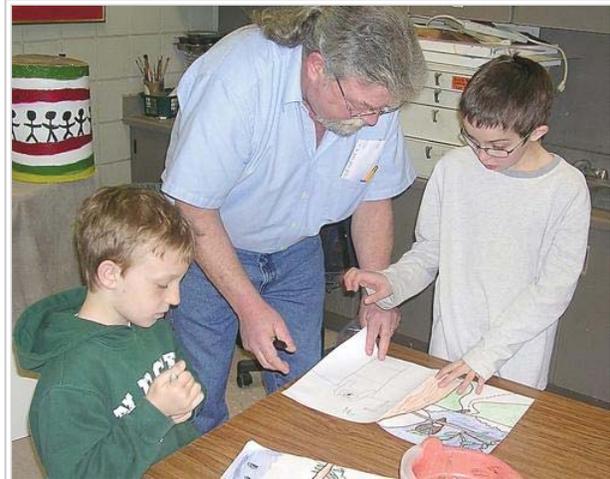
Island Lake student returns as artist-in-residence

by **Stephen Harding**
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SHOREVIEW — Island Lake opened its doors to students back in 1957, when Jim Stahl was a bright-eyed fourth grade student. Flash forward to April 2008, when Stahl has returned for two-weeks as an artist-in-residence.

The Duluth resident began his residency by showing the students basic drawing skills. In an April 8 session with third-grade students, he kept it easy, teaching them step-by-step how to draw objects using circles, squares and triangles. After a few steps the students were drawing trains, lions and bears.



Former Island Lake student artist Jim Stahl helps Jack Fluth (left) and Josh Cunningham with their art projects on April 8. - Photo by Stephen Harding

Stahl compares himself to iconic 1970s painter Bob Ross, "except I use crayon and pencils."

He said the biggest challenge of the gig is trying to cram all his lessons on technique into a two-week period.

Art specialist, Ann Ger-old-Stibal said the students have really enjoyed their time with Stahl and his easy style of instruction. She said she'd like to invite him back next year for three weeks.

"There was a lot of 'Wow' and 'Cool' during the class time," she said.

Stibal selected Stahl for the residency with Shoreview's 50th anniversary in mind. The two talked by phone and after reviewing Stahl's Web site Stibal invited him to participate.

Stahl said the Island Lake gig is his second this year. During the rest of the year, he attends art shows in Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota, selling his art. He said the north country near Duluth provides him much inspiration for the wildlife drawings that are his bread and butter.

He's also illustrated books, including a children's flip book written by Shoreview resident Rhon-die Fay. The book (from Shamrock Publishing Inc., 1997) is actually two stories back-to-back; one story, "Red," is about a boy and a dog and the flip side, "The Tiny String of Pearls" is about a girl and her grandmother.

More recently, Stahl has written and illustrated his own book called "Wonder in the Woods," which has yet to be published. It tells the story of a little girl getting lost in the woods, and with the help of Mother Nature's children she finds her way out.

Stahl said he illustrated the book for a good reason.

"Today's children lack wonder," Stahl said. "I'm trying to get children to wonder. I want them to get out and discover — that leads to knowledge."

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