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### **The Recess Desk**

School is not always about reading, writing and arithmetic. Recess is often a favorite part of the school day. It was for Walkerton artist, Cecky Ropelewski, a participant in the King and Queen Community Development Corporation's (KQCD) School Daze Public Art Project as well as art and singing. This artist chose to incorporate recess into her desk sculpture theme by pulling out her old "block box" and building things she used to make when she was younger. Cecky shared that "it just seemed appropriate for me to decorate my desk this way. Artists never really grow up...they just change the kind of art they make." Ropelewski fastened lincoln logs, dominos, blocks and tinker toys to one of the old school desks from the Marriott School in St. Stephens Church. Old school desks from the school were used as the basis for sculptures created by local artists for the School Daze public art project benefiting KQCD and the Marriott School Restoration Project.

Cecky's desk along with 12 other artists' desk sculptures were first publically exhibited at the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual 2008 Wine and Art Festival at Locust Grove ([www.locustgrove1665.com](http://www.locustgrove1665.com)) in Walkerton on June 14<sup>th</sup>, a local festival coordinated by Cecky and her festival committee. The idea arose when she and her husband Jerry moved back to Locust Grove. The location was perfect for an outdoor art show also featuring wines from local wineries. Ropelewski commented that "it seemed only right that we would have the first showing of the desk project at the festival...it opened up a venue for many people to get a look at them. I think a lot of people were pleasantly surprised and pleased to see such creative desks sitting out in the yard."

The desk sculptures will be exhibited at other area locations throughout the coming months in West Point, King and Queen, Essex and Tappahannock. Themes for the desk sculptures include a wide range from school related to quilting to aviation to river and wildlife. The project will conclude with a gala event in spring 2009 where the desk sculptures will be auctioned off as a fundraiser for KQCD and the Marriott School Restoration Project. The Marriott School Restoration Project is the planned renovation of the Marriott School into a community/cultural arts center for residents of King and Queen County and the Middle Peninsula. Business sponsorships are available in support of the public art project and include participation as a desk sculpture sponsor and as a table sponsor at the future gala event. To date sponsors for the School Daze Project include: Ball Lumber, Country Courier, International Training, Inc., Scott's Store, West Point Glass and West Point Pharmacy.

Cecky Ropelewski holds an architectural engineering degree and became a full time artist in 1979 when she left her architectural job to pursue art. She knows first-hand that when you are an artist you sometimes must supplement your income so she did other things she loved – painting backdrops, sewing costumes and acting and singing in musicals. She has participated in 20 musicals, 4 National Theatre tours and has sung with the Richmond Symphony Chorus for 30 years.

Cecky has shown her artwork at shows all over the country including Native American Pow Wows since her artwork is Native American influenced. She paints the “spirit of animals” in watercolor on handmade paper and embellishes them with beading, fur, and beaded feathers. Cecky also wraps all her frames in leather to give them a very Indian feeling.

If you would like more information or would like to participate in or volunteer with the School Daze Public Art Project, please contact the KQCD office at 804-769-9656 or email [schooldaze@kqcd.org](mailto:schooldaze@kqcd.org). If you are interested in sponsoring Cecky’s desk or another desk sculpture, please contact the KQCD office. For more information about KQCD and the Marriott School Restoration Project, please visit [www.kqcd.org](http://www.kqcd.org).

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