

LOCAL HEROES

Local painter uses creative skills to help out others

by Dona Foucault

Jeremy Bortz moved to Thornhill from South Africa in 1999 and has been involved in Toronto's art scene ever since.

Born in Johannesburg in 1965, Bortz says that violence and corruption and a basic lack of personal safety led he and his wife to immigrate to Canada.

Family ties to Thornhill and its strong South African community led Bortz to choose Thornhill as his new home.

After majoring in art in South Africa, it didn't take Bortz (a well-known artist in South Africa) long to start painting again once he arrived in Thornhill.

"I had attended the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, and while there were several good artists, I was disappointed in the quality of a lot of what was being displayed, so I decided to start painting again," he said.

Since then, he has created almost 100 paintings and has sold 72 of those.

Along with being a recognized artist, Bortz dabbles in philanthropy.

"I've done a lot for charity by

donating paintings to causes like the Leukemia Research Fund of Canada, Junior League of Toronto and Invest In Kids."

Paintings recently sold for the Leukemia Research Fund raised \$4,800.

After trying several times to organize official fundraising events for Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital but running into red tape, Bortz started raising money for them on his own.

"So far, I've raised almost \$24,000 by selling paintings and saving the proceeds for Sick Kids."

Why does Bortz do all this?

"I see a need in some people; some people are unable to help themselves. It's good to make a difference in one's life."

Bortz can get up to six calls a week from organizations requesting money or a donation of some sort.

"Sometimes you have to pick and choose and put the money where it will help the most."

And it's not just the multitude of charitable organizations that Bortz helps out that benefit from his artistic gift.

His paintings have also garnered local attention.

the thornhill toast

A Toronto television station will be doing a piece on him early this fall, and Jody Foster recently purchased two of his paintings.

Bortz, who works at downtown Toronto's, Frame Concepts, owned numerous galleries and photographic stores in South Africa but became well known there for his creative framing solutions.

He appeared on talk shows, wrote advice columns for a monthly magazine and hosted framing classes.

While residing in the town of Rustenburg, Bortz's active involvement in framing led him to participate in the development of a watercolour society.

As part of the society, he hosted numerous solo and group exhibitions.

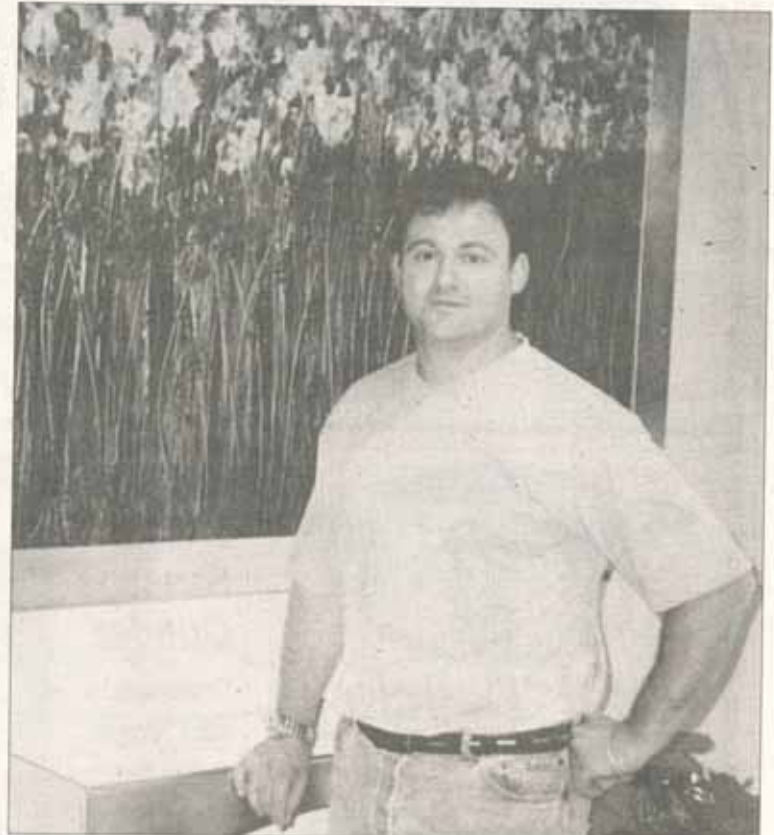
His works gained popular acclaim, and he was often commissioned to paint for individuals and corporations.

His paintings are best described as bright and expressive — kind of like his personality.

Bortz's next charitable project is a live performance on October 29 at the Royal York hotel during the Annual Celebrity Waitress Luncheon.

At the luncheon, he will display his rapid painting skills live to help raise more money for the Leukemia Fund.

For the most part, Bortz enjoys the spaciousness of his Centre Street and



▲ Jeremy Bortz's paintings raise money for various causes

New Westminster Drive neighbourhood, but he worries about what he describes as an increase in gang activity in the area.

"It has its good and its bad points, but I really love that I don't feel claustrophobic — I really like the openness

of it all."

The Thornhill Post salutes Jeremy Bortz for continuing to find creative ways to help make the world a better place.