



Submitted photo

Dennis Neidt is a certified Bob Ross painting instructor who delights in teaching oil painting to novices.

Dennis Neidt has a mission in life: To help budding painters learn how to make themselves happier, improve their self-esteem and generally enjoy life just a little bit more one stroke of the brush at a time.

Neidt is a Bob Ross certified instructor who is currently spending his free time teaching classes that will enable students to come in with little or no painting experience and walk out four or five hours later with an oil painting tucked under their arms.

For those who aren't old enough to remember, the late Bob Ross hosted an art class on public television entitled "The Joy of

Painting" that instructed painters how to quickly create oil paintings via a step-by-step method that broke down the process into more easily mastered steps. Ross also embraced the notion of "happy painting," an idea that Neidt encourages.

"It's your own world when you paint. You are in charge of your own world. For a lot of people, this is the only time they are in charge of anything," Neidt says. "You can move mountains in your pictures, put the sun up or down. It's up to you."

Neidt remembers watching Bob Ross paint on PBS many years ago and thinking to himself that he could do the same thing. In

The happy painter

Dennis Neidt shares the gift of painting in beginners' classes

the early 1990s, he signed up for a class that taught Ross' technique but it wasn't until more recently that he became a Bob Ross certified instructor himself after working with another Bob Ross instructor, Amy Stanek.

"I really owe Amy a lot. I assisted her with classes she taught around the area and she showed me the ropes," Neidt says.

There are only four places in the United States that hold certification classes and one is Viking Woodcraft in Waseca where Neidt earned his certification.

"People can go into a Bob Ross class not knowing how to paint at all. Sometimes they don't even know how to hold a paintbrush

scenes such as snow-covered landscapes, oceans and mountains. Students take their still wet paintings home at the end of each class.

"Oil paint takes weeks to dry," Neidt says, "so the students need to put them someplace safe while they're drying out."

Neidt, who lives in Waseca, served in the Army during the Vietnam War as an official U.S. Army illustrator and has a degree in graphic arts from South Central College. He is currently working for Corporate Graphics in North Mankato and hopes to take on teaching more art classes when he retires.

"There are people who will say that this is not fine art," Neidt says, referring to the Bob Ross style of painting. "They're right. It isn't fine art. But it's a start. Anybody can do this. There's nothing mysterious about it, no secret handshake, nothing like that." Neidt said that he's observed people's self-esteem improve after participating in one of his classes. Like Bob Ross, he enjoys seeing the happiness that comes out of creation.

"I like to tell people that they're doing fine while they're working on a painting," Neidt says. "Sometimes at the end of a class, we'll take pictures of students holding what they've made. You should see the smiles. It's very satisfying."

Neidt hangs his own paintings at the Waseca home he shares with his wife Vicki. "I still have fun painting. This is my own happy world."

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but they'll leave a little while later holding a painting that they did," Neidt says. "It's great to see."

Ross is currently teaching a monthly painting class at Hobby Lobby. Before each class, he emails the students who are enrolled a picture of the subject they'll be painting. Upon arrival, students are given everything they'll need from canvases to paintbrushes.

"I provide everything," Neidt says. "All the students need to bring are their own sweet selves and a willingness to learn." The Bob Ross method uses a wet-on-wet technique that allows the painter to put layers of different colors on top of each other. Students begin their paintings by starting at the farthest away point, such as the sun, and work their way in, creating details along the way.

Subjects for paintings in Neidt's classes typically include nature

