



Inna Pastorello/The Middletown Press

Donna Favreau, middle, is the instructor of Bill Svihovec and Lois Smith, both of whom won second place for their paintings in a National Arts Program contest.

# Fantastic talents

*Lois Smith and Bill Svihovec of Middletown won second place in the senior division of the Community Renewal Team's National Arts Program. Smith won for her pastel, "Two, Too Sweet," of her grandchildren; Svihovec earned second place for his oil, "Truck of Flowers," a scene he came across on a farm in Farmington.*

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## CoverStory

# Painters take pride in taking second place

*Lois Smith, Bill Svihovec are students in Donna Favreau's painting class*

By EDITH ZELDES  
 Middletown Press Correspondent

MIDDLETOWN — The love of painting has brought two seniors to the forefront of artistic honors. Lois Smith and Bill Svihovec have garnered second place in the senior division of the Community Renewal Team National Arts Program, recently at Capital Community College, Hartford.

This is the only art exhibition and contest in the state that's open to all Connecticut residents age 6 or older.

Paul C. Puzzo, president and chief executive officer of CRT,

writes in his "message from the president: "... The arts have the ability to lift people up and expand their horizons ... Congratulations to (the) winners... You are taking part in a program that has touched thousands, and will continue to inspire and reward everyone involved ..."

Smith won for her pastel picture, "Two, Too Sweet," of her grandchildren Shannon Smith, then 6, now 18; and Danielle Smith, then 3, now 15. Smith describes it as "a sweet picture of two little dancers especially close to my heart."

Svihovec received second place

for his oil painting, "Truck of Flowers" that he discovered on a farm in Farmington. "I chose this because it was different, with a lot of human interest — a truck with unusual decoration," says Svihovec.

Both winners are taught by Donna Favreau of the Rockfall section of Middlefield, members of her Middletown Senior Center oil painting class.

Favreau has nothing but praise for her students.

"Lois' pastel is absolutely beautiful — soft, delicate, with lovely colors within a nicely done composition," Favreau says. "Bill's oil is very eye-catching. If I had seen the truck, I would have painted it first. It's a crowd-pleaser, some-

thing anyone would want to paint or photograph."

Smith always enjoyed artwork, "ever since I picked up a crayon," but it was only after she retired in 1997 as administrative assistant at the Wesleyan University registrar's office, that she became serious about painting.

"I then took some pastel art courses just for fun, taught by Ellie Bender," Smith says. "In the fall of 1998, I learned about the Middletown Senior Center oil painting class. I had a lot of time on my hands, and joined."

Smith received honorable mention at last year's CRT National Arts Program contest for her oil painting of another set of grandchildren: Ethan Smith, then 4, now 15; and Blake Smith, then 2, now 13. Its title, "Seaside Treasures," depicts them picking up

shells on the beach.

Smith is also secretary of the Middletown Art Guild and has had her work shown at the Portland Library.

Svihovec was a partner with Modular Engineering, Rockfall, for 27 years, and has extensive experience as a mechanical engineer, reading blueprints and creating diagrams for parts. "I have done pen-and-ink sketches and always wanted to know about oil painting. I discovered these senior citizen classes and started in 1994 in the first grant program, and have been with it ever since," he says.

A few years ago, he received honorable mention at the Arts and Crafts of Meriden Studio 53 with his oil painting, "Mayberry Mill."

"He pays extreme attention to detail and is kidded about using a one-hair brush," Favreau says of Svihovec.

Favreau began teaching painting in 1992 at the Cromwell Senior Center. She came to the Middletown Senior Center in 1994 through grants from the Art Guild of Middletown and the Middletown Commission on the Arts. She also teaches painting twice a year for a six-week program at the Salvation Army Adult Day Care Center in Middletown.

"We have a spirited class of 18 at the Middletown Senior Center," Favreau explains. "They are at all levels, from beginners to accomplished, from ages 60 to the middle 80s. All are very talented and enjoy each other's company."

"We're a family here," Smith adds, "and our own families can't wait to see our finished products."

The class goes on field trips, painting on location, and travels at least twice a year to art shows and museums. The group had its work shown, not only at the Middletown Senior Center, but also at The Middletown Press and local banks.

"I have a show at home going all the time with all my paintings," Svihovec laughs.

Liz Dupont-Diehl is CRT director of public relations. "The contest and exhibition are an opportunity to help people discover the joys and rewards of artistic experience," she explains. "This program is for the artist in everyone — to see their work publicly on display. There are some fantastic talents evident in the exhibits and this ... can pull it all together."

For information, call (800) 560-5471 or the Middletown Senior Center at 344-3513.