

**SHOW-ME LIFESTYLE**

# Young artist's painting receives national honor

By **BRENDA BLACK**

**R**EBEKAH Nastav's sparkling deep-blue eyes dance with creativity and dreams. They also quietly reflect a nature-loving soul within this artistic country girl from Amoret. Though she is more comfortable in jeans than a dress and would rather be out in the barn with a calf, the unassuming 15-year-old is now a celebrity.

Nastav traveled to Washington, D.C., in June to have her Junior Duck Stamp Contest painting, "Morning Swim," presented at the 2006 World Philatelic Exhibition as a national champion. More than 34,000 youth from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and American Samoa submitted artwork for consideration.

At the "first day of sale" ceremony, Nastav autographed her painting when it was introduced in miniature version

**Key Points**

- Rebekah Nastav is national winner in duck stamp contest.
- Teen artist's painting is featured on collector postage stamp.
- Her paintings are inspired by farm surroundings and wildlife.

as a \$5 collector's edition U.S. postage stamp.

This is Nastav's highest honor in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Junior Duck Stamp competition, but she is not new to winning. Nastav has three-consecutive age division titles and qualified for the national contest by being selected "Best of Show" for the state of Missouri.

Ironically, Nastav's talent for painting is not the product of years of study. She says she was born with the ability. "I started when I was probably 1 year old," she explains. "Mom and all three of us kids loved finger painting."

Nastav's parents, Bob and Janice, provided opportunities for exploration in their family's homeschooling. For years, Nastav spent her art time sketching horses. "I didn't draw a picture without a horse in it," she says.

That was the case until she learned about the Junior Duck Stamp Contest. She decided to give it a try with the help of a family friend. Susan Hearting, Appleton City, paints wildlife and volunteers as a 4-H arts and crafts project leader. She agreed to be Nastav's objective coach when it came to painting ducks. So, the equine lover traded scenes of green pastures filled with horses for quiet streams and waterfowl.

Now Nastav's winning paintings include a single male wood duck, a pair of pintail ducks



"**MORNING SWIM**," by Rebekah Nastav, won top honors in the national Junior Duck Stamp Contest.



**REBEKAH NASTAV**, 15-year-old artist from Amoret, has received statewide and nationwide recognition for her paintings.

and this year's striking redhead. Painting the red-head duck, however, didn't come easily. Nastav confesses that she messed up a couple of times and counted on Hearting's advice to help her past the discouragement. She continued bouncing ideas off her more-experienced mentor. Still, the final decisions — and the work — remained up to Nastav. Her persistence paid off.

Back home in Amoret is where Nastav finds her inspiration and plans to keep her roots. That is where she is closest to God's creatures, including farm animals and wildlife. She hopes to use her homegrown talent and national exposure to benefit both agriculture and conservation.

Nastav plans to invest some of the \$5,000 prize money from the duck stamp contest in raising beef cattle. She also hopes her painting and proceeds from the stamp sales will encourage conservation of wetlands.

*Black writes from Butler.*



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