

Wilson named Mayor's Choice Artist for October

■ Former singer takes up painting



Wilson

Herald Staff Report

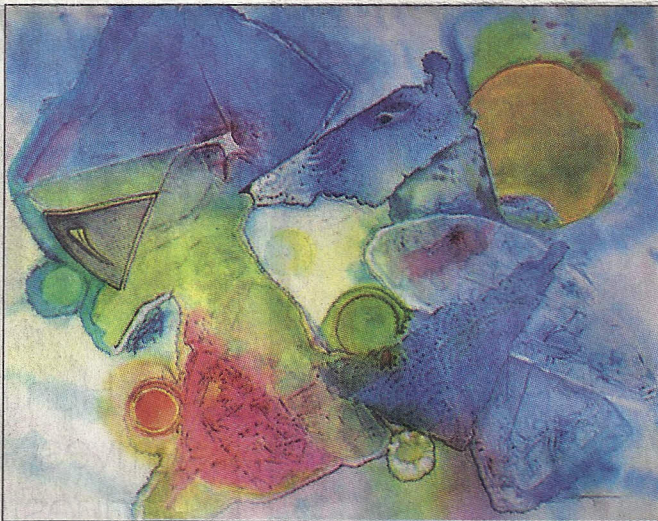
Kimberly Forness Wilson, an artist who began painting to help recuperate from an injury, has been chosen October 2010 Mayor's Choice Artist and will be recognized at a reception from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Oct. 27 at City Hall.

In celebration of Wilson's work with youth and her love for singing, students from the Bel Canto Studio of Voice will perform at the reception, directed by Maria Kennedy Williams. Performers will be Billy Beaton, Leah Biberdorf, Ryan King, Kelly Knutson, Haley Larson, Daniella Lima, Evan Moser and Chloe Omlid.

Wilson grew up in Grand Forks and Devils Lake, and graduated in 1977 from Red River High School. She worked with Gail Roan Pearson, Ph.D., a Grand Forks psychotherapist specializing in women's issues and women's addictions. Wilson's interest in holistic healing took her to Maui, Hawaii, where she became certified as a holistic trainer.

In Maui, she met her future husband, Jib. They returned to Grand Forks so that he could live one winter in North Dakota, a news release said. After one winter, he moved back to Hawaii. She graduated from UND with a bachelor's degree in psychology, then returned to Maui in 1986. She and Jib were married in 1987.

Wilson spent the next 15 years working with Maui's youth and their families, combining her training in the arts and holistic health. She ran visual and theater arts programs for the Department of Education, ran the Manaolu Youth Shelter, was educational coordinator for Maui Youth Theatre, executive director for Theatre Maui and executive director for Kihei Youth Center. Wilson and her husband decided to become foster parents and in 1998 met Matthew Ikaika, who became part of their adopted family in 2001.



▲ "The Gold Egyptian," a watercolor, is painted by Kimberly Forness Wilson, Mayor's Choice Artist for October.

In 2003, Wilson suffered a freak accident. While working for Hawaii's Department of Health, she turned her head and fractured her skull, leaving her without a gag reflex on her left side and experiencing stabs of incapacitating pain. She also lost her ability to sing.

Her mother, Ramona, came to Maui to try to help her daughter cope with the pain and to deal with the loss of singing. Her mother insisted, "Paint, it will distract you from the pain." The process did, indeed, help Wilson experience brief and growing periods of relief.

In June 2004, the Wilsons refinanced their home and went to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. During exploratory surgery, it was discovered that Wilson had a bone fragment tearing away at tissue and nerves.

The Wilsons have moved to North Dakota to be near family and the Mayo Clinic. Kim has spent the past six years pursuing recovery through physical therapy, rehabilitation, chiropractic treatment, pain clinic and massive amounts of family time and creativity. She, her husband and their son have a new life

between Grand Forks and Maui.

"I have a new definition of a great day," Wilson said in a news release. "It is not whether I am totally productive all day but that I am productive during the day. Being productive is now not all work either. It is a great day when I do something for someone else, call someone I love, work a little, paint a little and enjoy some part of the day. Healing from a catastrophe requires a lot of redefining, and this new way of looking at the world is working for me."

Wilson is a prolific artist. You can see examples of her work at www.KimberlyFornessWilson.com/

The Mayor's Choice Program began in July. Every three months, Grand Forks Mayor Mike Brown will choose a visual artist to show his or her art in the atrium of City Hall. The North Valley Arts Council is seeking nominations for future Mayor's Choice artists. For more information about the program or to apply, call (701) 772-3710 or e-mail info@novac.org.

The Oct. 27 event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.