

Key art started as a simple idea and snowballed

By Tara Marion

You'll be seeing the caroling snowmen that appear on the cover of this section again and again throughout this year's Festival of Trees. Not only will they hover above and about the event site in the form of large Styrofoam cutouts, but also the festive snow family will be used to adorn brochures, posters, bookmarks and clothing related to the festival.

These snowy singers are the foundation of the marketing materials created by the Junior League of Kalamazoo and were brought to life through a lengthy step-by-step process involving the collaborative efforts of several Junior League members and event supporters.

Initially, several ideas were discussed by festival co-chairs Amy O'Connor and Leslie Jo Hurwitz. After they narrowed it down to a few ideas, they passed them along to Junior League member Sarah Maurer, who has a background in art. Maurer drafted some designs illustrating their ideas and together they came up with the final version. Draw some singing snowmen, keep it simple and use only two or three colors, they told Maurer.

"I just took all of that and put it together to, hopefully, make what they wanted," Maurer explained. Hurwitz and O'Connor liked the result.

"This has been my artistic outlet," said Maurer of the art-related projects she's done for Junior League. In the past, she has done calligraphy for signs displayed at the festival, as well as other league projects that call upon her art minor.

With Maurer's art in hand, the co-chairs called upon local graphic designer Peter Seuss-Brakeman to scan the design original and integrate it in their various marketing pieces.

"He's very generous," Hurwitz said of the owner of Seuss-Brakeman Design, In Kalamazoo. "He's done work for us for the last three years."

Seuss-Brakeman did make a few "twists" to Maurer's original art which included several spiral swirls. Maurer had used some swirls within the printed O's of the theme, "Voices of Hope," and also in the corners of the border in her art. Seuss-Brakeman took the swirls and used them as independent design elements to tie the various marketing materials together. In one instance, a swirl was lightened and enlarged for a background pattern; in another case swirls were used to replace bullets in list formats.

Seuss-Brakeman said, "Since (the swirls were) used in a few different ways in the (original) illustration, we thought it would be a good thing to pull out—yet it would still tie in with this year's artwork."

After Seuss-Brakeman finished the marketing pieces for the festival, artist Norm Goodling took the art and modified it further to reproduce on the front cover of this Gazette special section. Goodling, a Kalamazoo Gazette marketing artist, said, "I didn't change the design in any way—just embellished it.

One of Goodling's changes included modifying the sky. Originally black, the sky was changed to blue for the cover. Goodling also added text to the cover, including the date and location of the event.

As a longtime supporter of Festival of Trees, Goodling actually designed the logo for the event two years ago. "This year we're just taking someone else's design and adapting it, so it's more of a minor thing, but it's still kind of fun," he said. "I enjoy working with other people's art too."

The three caroling snowmen on the cover took a long journey to reach your hands. What was originally dictated as “simple” art required the skills of many. And the journey of the snowmen well illustrates the journey of all their accomplishments. Collaborative effort is the strength on which accomplishment is built. Without Maurer, O’Connor, Hurwitz, Seuss-Brakeman and Goodling keeping the ball rolling, the three snowmen concept could have melted in its tracks.

And without the heat generated from the momentum of this collaborative effort by the Festival of Trees fundraiser, the Junior League of Kalamazoo and the various area organizations benefitting from funds raised at the festival, a wonderful warming effect would not be able to spread from person to person throughout our community year after year.