



Idea springs to life in string

PUBLISHED SUN, NOV 18, 2012 08:00 PM
MODIFIED SUN, NOV 18, 2012 10:25 PM

Hunter Schafer, 13, won a national contest to design a Kamibashi string doll with his concept for Walker the Waiter, seen at left after it was made into a real doll. Robert Willett - rwillett@newsobserver.com

BY STACY CHANDLER - SCHANDLER@NEWSOBSERVER.COM

A few years ago, **Hunter Schafer** was spending a lot of time playing with Kamibashi string dolls, cheerful little characters that portray everything from a fisherman to a vampire. Now he can play with a string doll that was born in his own imagination: Walker the Waiter, winner of a contest to determine the next character in the lineup based on Facebook "likes."

Hunter, an eighth-grader at Martin Middle School in Raleigh, had entered the contest before, but this was the first time his entry rose to the top of the heap. The night before the final Facebook votes would be tallied last summer, he went to bed hoping the lead his entry had gained would stick around.

"I wasn't expecting anything to change overnight," he said, "and luckily I woke up the next morning and nothing had. So I won!" Hunter's mom, Katy Schafer, said that even though they saw the "likes" piling up as the voting deadline neared, the win was still a surprise.

"He was really stunned," she said, "because it was a national contest and this wasn't just about people who knew him, who like him, voting on his work. This was strangers out there as well, on the Facebook page. So I think the confidence boost was pretty huge." Hunter said it felt "really cool" a few weeks later when 10 Walker the Waiter string dolls (special power: "To make sure your glass is always half full") arrived in his mailbox and he could hold his idea in his hand. Those 10 dolls went quickly, he said.

"We still have some of them, but we've been sending them to grandparents and giving them to friends and buying more so we can give them to people," he said. The Kamibashi contest is just another in a string of successes early in Hunter's art career. He currently has several scrapbook-styled dioramas on sale at Moonlight Pizza in Raleigh, and his design for a reusable bag won a local contest for the Fresh Market store at Cameron Village and now is competing at the national level.

It's not that he's after the glory of winning contests; he just really likes creating things. "I've been doing art ever since I was three," Hunter said. "Instead of getting up and watching TV in the morning, my parents kind of set up some paper and crayons and I just did that every morning. And then I grew to like it and practiced, and that same thing has been going on and I've been getting better, and that's taken me to other interests, like fashion design."

He also likes comic-book art and watercolors - he knows he wants a career in art, and he's trying to narrow down his interests, but it's hard at age 13. "I sort of am staying in all of the areas right now," he said. Art is something that allows Hunter "to express his creativity," his mom said. "His imagination is able to just soar."

And it's something he kind of can't help doing. "I guess it's a way to just kind of relax," Hunter said. "I draw everywhere on everything, it's just kind of like an instinct. My hand just - if it's not writing, it's drawing."



Hunter Schafer, 13, won a national contest to design a Kamibashi string doll. He also has displayed his artwork at Moonlight Pizza in Raleigh and won the local phase of competition to design a reusable bag for Fresh Market. Robert Willett - rwillett@newsobserver.com

What do you think?

What is your favorite color?

- Green
- Red
- Orange
- Blue
- Purple
- Yellow

Submit



Most Read Articles Feed