

# Lauded artist creates with real mouse

By STACY TREVENON  
Half Moon Bay Review

For Kendra Davis, recently named a San Mateo Arts County Arts Council Arts Star Award winner for 1995, creativity reaches into some surprising realms: many artistic media, other people's art shows, and live mice.

She's a lifelong artist who tackles new media at every opportunity, curator of Coastal Arts League's Gallery 92 West and Coastal Arts League Museum, and a judge with the Rat, Mouse and Hamster Fanciers of the Bay Area, which she co-founded.

It was in her CAL hat that she received her award as the Outstanding Volunteer for 1995, at the festive Arts Star Luncheon in San Mateo on Wednesday, Feb. 22. As curator, she organizes and hangs the monthly and twice-yearly juried shows of the works of CAL members or visiting artists.

"She works so hard for us, with so little acknowledgement," said CAL president Alyanne McGaffey.

"Sometimes I wonder if this is for altruism or if I'm the stupidest person in the county," said Davis, 40, an upbeat, intelligent woman with a ready laugh.

Davis was named assistant curator of CAL when the local arts league opened in 1988. She became curator of the gallery when it was established in Spanishtown in 1991, and co-curator of the museum in 1993.



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Kendra Davis, surrounded by shows that she's arranged: "I'm developing something pretty, which is what matters to me."

But her curatorial expertise goes back to stints as a teen summer camp arts and crafts director in 1971. Her own first showing was of a charcoal sketch that her father, then a Stanford University student, sneaked into an exhibit of modern art on the walls of the university's math

building.

"What that said to me was that my work was quality," she said.

Now, dozens of shows and awards in Utah and Half Moon Bay later, Davis' jewelry, baskets, paintings and more adorn Gallery 92 West. She is a sculptor, painter in oil, acrylic,

watercolor and sumi-e (a Japanese medium,) linoleum block print-maker, basket maker, hat maker, jeweler and desktop publisher.

She can't name a favorite. "If I get stuck in one thing, I get bored... and it's time to change mediums," she said. "Whenever anything inter-

ests me, I buy the materials and plunge in."

An unusual medium that deeply interested Davis is the "satin frizzy Dutch marked mouse," that she's been trying for two years to develop. By integrating a curly, frizzy coat with the distinctly marked eye color, ears and tiny feet of the standard short-haired "Dutch mice," she is developing "the ultimate cute markings on the ultimate cute mouse."

A lifelong love of the critters led Davis to cofound the Rat, Mouse and Hamster Fanciers in 1984 with Alan Pessier, who ran the local Pumpkin Patch Pet Store in the early 1980s. It is part of an international organization, she says, that claims members as far as Holland and Australia. She serves as a judge at rat, mouse and hamster shows where the animals have to conform to standards of perfection just like show dogs or cats do. As a judge, she scrutinizes the markings, coats, colors and general condition of the furry little contestants.

A former breeder of guinea pigs, Davis had already developed two breeds of guinea pigs, a satin Abyssinian and satin teddy before opting for something smaller. At home, 10 five-gallon aquariums are her living paint pots.

The new color, based on recessive genes, is taking time to coax into existence, but for Davis the artist, the fun lies in the process of creating. "I'm developing something pretty," she said, "which is what matters to me."