

Fresh canvas for art teacher

BY RICHARD TEDESCO

Art has been a part of Jeanne Rose's life ever since her older sister taught her how to draw horses when she a young girl.

Rose, 54, is now retiring after

25 years as part of the North Side School staff. But she will continue to teach art in workshops as she pursue her own work as a painter.

The experience of teaching art at North Side was like a dream fulfilled.

"I always felt I died and went to heaven," Rose said. "I like the spirit of kids, the spirit of not knowing the answers and discovering."

These days, she said, that

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Rose retires from North Side school



Retiring art teacher Jeanne Rose with one of her Orkney landscapes.

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spirit of discovery becomes harder to reach in children once they're past the first grade. She points to the multitude of activities and digital media distractions that ultimately can impede a child's intellectual development, and the failure of some parents to foster a sensibility that builds their children's perception of the world around them.

"I think parents have forgotten what their job is," Rose said. "I think kids have been over-scheduled into slots."

She has also witnessed a profound transition in the nature of children's awareness about the natural world.

"I see a change in that kids don't have a full sense of wonder at things outside the classroom," she said. "A

large part of what I've done is to be available when they have a discovery."

Actually, Rose's own experience with art began long before she started drawing, as she mixed oil paints for her mother, for whom painting was an avocation. She regularly received art materials as Christmas presents, but she was never really satisfied with what she painted.

Rose took a minor in art when she attended Adelphi University as an elementary education major, "doubling her options," as she put it. She considers her fortunate to have found a job in the Elmont school system, where she worked for eight years before moving to the East Williston school where she spent the rest of her elementary teaching career.

She said she experienced a major epiphany

when she went to Scotland on Fulbright exchange and learned a thematic approach to her profession while teaching there. She realized the natural integration that existed between disparate subject areas and art as she taught Scottish grade schoolers about taxi cabs, and brought that approach with her to the North Side School.

She realized the "gem" of an educational moment when a student might bring a found object like a bird's egg to class, effectively providing a moment when all her young students might be inspired by examining it.

"It made me realize the opportunity to seize the moment," Rose recalled. "You have to be there at that moment with the full passion for what you're doing."

Her trip to Scotland in 1984 had also reawakened

her own sense about creating her own art. Working from pictures of vivid landscapes in Scotland's northern Orkney region she extemporized with the composition of the skies in her paintings.

"It made me realize you could have a sky any color and shape," she recalled.

When she contracted cancer 15 years ago, Rose returned to Orkney and the next decade was a period of transition in her life as she overcame her disease, went through a divorce and started focusing more seriously on her oil painting.

Examples of her work have been on display at the Wheatley School. The work offers an impressionistic perspective on Stonehenge-like circles of stone that predate the renowned stone circle in the English countryside.

Returning to her grandparents house in Woodstock, she started painting again eight years ago, returning to the Orkney Islands in Scotland in 2004 and 2005, bringing friends with her during her summer sojourns there. She started offering workshops there and created a web site (www.rose-crossing.com) to build what is now a business from her passion for her avocation.

Orkney natives approached about teaching workshops in the local community center. And this summer, she will return as an artist in residence at The Piers Art Center at Stromness in Orkney.

For her, the transition as she leaves her elementary school career is a natural one, as she responds to something of an intangible force that is summoning her now.

"There's something else for me to do," she said.