

Local business owner teaches pony to paint

By Nick Browne
Editor

Animals can do amazing things. Monkeys have been taught to type and act. Parrots can talk. The list goes on and on. Most you see on TV or in Hollywood, not in your own backyard. Well, you can now say Downingtown is the home of a very talented pony.

Chincoteague Minnow, the pony ridden by new Studio 3 owner Kelly Hellhake in Mounted Games competition, is an artist.

That's right, an actual artist.

Hellhake taught Minnow to paint.

While training Minnow, as well as attempting to build trust with her pony, Hellhake taught Minnow several tricks through clicker training. According to her website, "Minnow discovered that learning was filled with hugs and treats, and I quickly found that he would do anything for food. Trick training has built a special bond between us. Minnow now has a long list of tricks that he loves performing for anyone



Chincoteague Minnow's paintings displayed in Studio 3.

Photo by Nick Browne

that will watch, and we both enjoy competing in mounted games more than ever!"

Hellhake taught Minnow to paint in January.

"I was trying to think of something new," she said. "I thought, 'I love art' and started teaching him to paint."

Hellhake says it didn't take Minnow long to learn his newest trade.

"It didn't take him long, maybe an hour," she said. "He's very smart."

Teaching Minnow tricks was bred more out of necessity than fun for Hellhake.

"I do mounted games with him, it's like a relay race," she said. "He was terrified of all of it. I started teaching him tricks so he wouldn't be scared."

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“He got real good at tricks and mounted games, so I do both.”

Not only does Minnow paint, but Hellhake also sells his work at Studio 3. Also at Studio 3 is a video of Minnow painting. He holds the brush in his mouth and paints on a canvas. Hellhake also had a booth at Good Neighbor Day in which she sold his work.

According to Hellhake, Minnow’s painting is causing quite a stir amongst business owners in Downingtown.

“Tom, the mailman, said the businesses have been talking

about it,” she said. “He said it’s the talk of the town.”

Minnow’s paintings have drawn people to Studio 3 to see what the talk is about.

“People heard about it and would come in,” said Hellhake. “A lot of little kids love it and think it’s the coolest thing in the world.”

While in Kentucky for mounted games competition, Minnow’s skills garnered quite a following.

“When we were in Kentucky, he was signing autographs for the little kids,” said Hellhake.

Minnow’s work and more information can be seen at *pony-paintings.com*.