

STORY BY TRACI CUMBAY  
 SUBMITTED PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAM NEWELL

No weeds, and the light is always perfect on canvas



# Pastel garden

"Elizabeth's Garden, Hatfield House."



Detail of "Sunflowers, Blue Vase."



**F**ocus isn't a problem for Pam Newell, who for 18 years has worked daily in her Fishers home studio to create Impressionist pastel paintings.

Keeping her focal point in sight is harder.

"Like a piece of music, every painting has a message in it. That's the focal point. It's what you first notice that made you want to paint. When you get into a painting and get carried along with it, sometimes other elements take over and you lose your focal point."

Newell's mentor, the artist C.W. Mundy, had a cure for finding lost focal points.

"What he did was devastating but necessary," Newell said. "He took our precious little oil paintings, took his paint brush and destroyed sections but left the focal point. It was like the painting had a message all of a sudden."

Newell's subjects tend to be gardens and landscapes, but every now and again she paints a pig or a person. She does it all with pastels these days, but she previously was an oil painter who earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of Massachusetts.

"Having kids led me to pick up

pastels," Newell said. "When you're painting in oils, everything is so toxic — turpentine, linseed oil, all these mixtures that I didn't want them to drink or spill or get their fingers in."

Newell had been accustomed to doing her oil painting "alla prima" — in one sitting.

"You can't do that when you have kids," she said. "You get called away, and when you come back everything's dry. I started playing around with pastels about 18 years ago when my daughter was born."

A lot of her inspiration comes from her garden, which Newell tends with a master gardener's hand and an artist's eye.

"I can't say I'm Monet, but he loved his garden, too," Newell said. "Gardening and art go together. Gardening isn't enough for me; I've got to capture it — capture the light and the color. There are no weeds in my paintings, and the light is always perfect."

Newell's oldest daughter with husband Bruce recently headed off for her first year at DePauw University, meaning Newell is "at half capacity" at home with just her son, who's a freshman at Hamilton Southeastern.

That means more time in the studio for Newell, and more time at work on another project: the

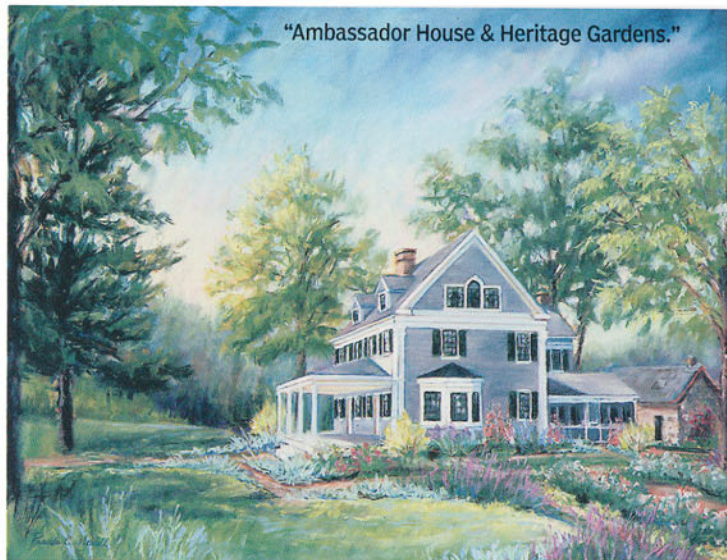
Ambassador House, a renovation that will bring a community arts center to Fishers. Newell serves on the board for the project, and her painting of the house hangs in Fishers Town Hall.

"We need a cultural balance in Fishers," Newell said. "We need (arts) that you don't have to drive to Indianapolis to see — a refuge in our own backyard, so to speak. I jumped on board 10 years ago because I loved the history part of it, the intrigue of the people who lived there, the stories they told from 1826 to 2006."

"And the story is still going on."

### Where to see her work

You can check out two of Newell's paintings in the Hoosier Salon exhibit at the Indiana State Museum (check?). There's an online gallery of her work at [www.digitallydone.com/fineartgalleries.html](http://www.digitallydone.com/fineartgalleries.html).



"Ambassador House & Heritage Gardens."