

Sanders County Ledger
And The Paradise Center Present

Dakota Slonaker
Hot Springs Junior High
Spotlight on the Arts – November 2022



“A budding young artist,”
“Quiet and dependable,” “Self-
motivated,” “So creative.”
These are the terms used by
staff at Hot Springs Junior High
when talking about twelve-
year-old Dakota Slonaker.

Slonaker, nick-named “Kota”
by friends, carries on an art
tradition in her family. Her
grandmother, an oil painter,
was her initial inspiration for
painting.

Two older sisters are also
artists – one of them painted a
mural in her bedroom.

Watercolor painting is what Slonaker enjoys most, although she looks forward to learning other artistic media in the future. As with most artists, she has her favorites when it comes to subject matter. She loves to paint Montana’s landscapes. She sees mountains as a hallmark of our state, and she loves another often-seen aspect of Montana - cows! The watercolor image for this article is a prime example.

This is no ordinary cow – she is a fashion statement! When asked if this cow had a name, Slonaker said “no”, but if she had one it might be “Suzy”! Part of what is captivating about this image is that we learn, with only a glance, a great deal about this specific cow’s personality. She is not just one of the herd! She is special and not to be forgotten! That is the goal of all artists, to convey a feeling, to share

a particular message about the subject matter, and to leave an impression on a viewer that he/she will remember.

Slonaker has been an artist since her days in elementary school and plans to keep at it. Her teacher, Candy Franklin, wants to support not only Slonaker's talent but also her creative approach to art.

Slonaker's advice to other young painters is to learn from the work of others – not to copy their work – but to gain insight and inspiration from their creations, techniques, and approaches to art. She also thinks it is important for young people to take a chance and try art, experiment with different media, and create something unique.