

Eric Kanagy, a man behind the scene

As a regular part of our magazine we plan on including profiles of people who are involved with the Goshen art community. We hope that this helps us all to appreciate the talented people that help make the Goshen community what it is.

For our first interview we chose Eric Kanagy, who see is involved in several different ways here in Goshen. Eric, 26, was born in Lancaster, Penn. Eric considers himself primarily an entrepreneur, and as an interesting fact says that he co-owner of a small, homebuilt airplane.

Background

Maple City Art Review: If you have one story that you feel exemplifies who you were as a child, what would it be?

Eric Kanagy: After I was born, my mom grew concerned about me because I would lay for hours in my crib, staring at the whirly thing hanging above it, not making a sound. She actually took me to the doctor and asked if I was mentally retarded. The doctor did a short examination and told my mother that no, I was fine, she was just lucky to have a quiet kid. I did puke a lot the first year of my life so that more or less balanced out my passivity. This story more or less exemplifies who I was as a child (sans the puking after the first year) – quiet, shy, highly creative, and often lost in my own world.

MCAR: What were you interested in doing as a child? Do you feel like that relates to the varied work you do today?

EK: I loved creating things as a kid – cities in the sandbox, LEGO spaceships, microwaves out of cardboard boxes, chemical labs out of dried up markers soaked in water, giant sand castles at the beach, forts in the nearby woods. The creation process of having a vision, implementing it, and then building on top of it is exactly what I did as a child and continue to do today. Making a client happy at the end of a huge project is just as satisfying as seeing my sand castle's defenses thwart the rising tide.

MCAR: You seem to work a lot in the art and the business worlds, were there particular events that drew you in these directions, or was it more a gradual process?

EK: Art is the process of creation and growth, as is entrepreneurship. I don't see much difference between the

two worlds, other than between the perceptions of artists and entrepreneurs, who often believe they're from different planets. Since I was a kid, I've had an interest in making things and I've continued to do that throughout my short life.

Current Events

MCAR: People may have seen the RedPost screens up around town, share a little bit about these, and how you got the idea?



EK: The idea for digital signs like RedPost/Goshen is nothing original on my part. A local network of signs in a small town is something more unique that I haven't seen elsewhere. I did originally think of the concept about four years ago while trying to think of ways to promote events at New World Arts. At that time, however, LCD prices were way too high to make the system feasible. For some reason, I started thinking about the idea again this fall after noticing that LCD prices had more than halved in four years. Once I get an idea in my head, I tend to run with it until I find it to be not feasible, dumb, impractical or a good idea. As far as I can tell so far, I'm on to something.

MCAR: What organizations or businesses are you involved with here in Goshen or further abroad?

EK: I'm involved on the boards of three local organizations: Downtown Goshen, Inc., the Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale, as well as the Technology Council of the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce.

MCAR: How would you rate Goshen as a place to live and do business? As one involved in the art community, how would you rate it? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

EK: I tend to believe numbers more than impressions. The San Francisco area is just under 2.5x more expensive to live in than Goshen. By that measure, I'm doing pretty well here. As far as the art community, I don't have good numbers, but my overall impression is that Goshen is a place that really shouldn't exist. There are too many artists in too small a town doing too much interesting work than should actually be here. The thing is, most people don't have a clue as to how much is actually going on all the time in the Goshen art scene. I'm hoping RedPost/Goshen helps change that perception.

The major weakness that I see in the Goshen arts scene is its lack of funding. It's hard to be an artist full time and be able to make a living (unless you're an artist-entrepreneur... except there's no guaranteed pay there either, trust me). This is, however, Goshen's greatest strength as well – scarcity breeds creativity. And that scarcity also makes art on the local level highly accessible. If you want to try something out in theatre, film, painting, ceramics, business-founding, or some other art



Left to Right: David Daugherty, President, Goshen Chamber of Commerce President; Jeff Lund, Jeff Showalter and Sharon Welsh, Chamber Ambassadors; Rachel Hershberger, Goshen Farmer's Market; Eric Kanagy, RedPost inc. CEO; Daniel Palmer, Dannyprose owner; Mayor Allan Kauffman, City of Goshen

form, you can pretty simply without taking on too much risk.

Future Plans

MCAR: What are some upcoming ventures?

EK: By July 1 (at the latest, hopefully sooner), we are going to launch RedPost/Kit, a do-it-yourself home picture frame.

MCAR: How do you see RedPost evolving? Is the goal to expand the network into other areas?

EK: I would love to partner with a regional arts organization, like ArtsEverywhere.com, to tie RedPost/Goshen into their events system and expand it throughout the Michiana region. RedPost, Inc. is not in the ad sales business – we want to provide the hardware and software that help other people communicate their message where they want to, when they want to.

MCAR: What advice would you offer someone who is just starting out in the business or art professions? What is the one piece of advice you have found most helpful for yourself?

EK: Failure is relative to how you measure it. I've yet to make it rich on any of the three businesses I've started. Nor was I able to get New World Arts to a point of sustainability, although we definitely made progress in that direction while I was still volunteering there. My advice would be always try things

(well, evaluate them first to see if it's really just a dumb idea or an idea whose time hasn't come yet) and no matter what happens, you'll learn a lot very rapidly. New ideas/innovation cannot fail.