

2007 - Studio / Gallery Provides Art show, Instruction, by Alex Blue, Northwest Explorer, Tucson, AZ

Northwest Side residents can enjoy fine-art shows and even take art classes at Toscana Studio and Gallery in Oro Valley. Oro Valley sculptor Linda Ahearn opened the gallery last August at 9040 N. Oracle Road in hopes of bringing the arts closer to home in her community.

“There aren't lot of things to do it Oro Valley, so I want to create a place where people can see art from a variety of artists,” said Ahearn, 45. With a bachelor of fine arts degree in painting and sculpture from Holy Names College in Oakland, Calif., Ahearn taught art classes at Copper Creek Elementary School in Oro Valley and out of her garage before opening Toscana, a working art studio and gallery. She now teaches oil painting and sculpture to children and adults there.

Housed in a former office space of only about 900 square feet, Toscana is half studio – complete with paint-spattered smocks and works in progress – and half gallery, featuring changing shows of local, national and international artists. Toscana's current show features two Northwest Side artists, Rebecca Bushner and Angela Rose, and runs through June 30.

“I think the Toscana Gallery is really a hidden gem,” said Rose, who does oil painting on metal. “Linda has her heart and soul in the place, and you can feel it. I think she's going to help enliven the art scene and the night scene in Oro Valley. Ahearn also coordinates gallery shows of her students' work.

Robert Gay, whose 8- and 10- year-old sons take sculpture classes from Ahearn, said he's glad there is a place his children can supplement the once-a-week art instruction they get in school. Toscana will host a free indoor and outdoor art walk from 7 to 9 tonight. Ahearn said she hopes to eventually establish a regular art night in Oro Valley and to expand her gallery and open a larger art school.