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Local art at the river

Baseball photograph exhibit on display at Niles cafe

By **JULIE FERRARO**
Tribune Correspondent

NILES -- Giving the community something different.

That's one reason patrons of Riverfront Café in Niles can not only enjoy a good meal and relaxing atmosphere at the Front Street location, but also the work of local artists.

According to manager Allison Watson, Riverfront Café offers a different art exhibit each month on the mezzanine overlooking the main dining room. It's a chance for local artists to display their work at no charge, while making the community aware of their talent.

"The exhibits bring the community here," said Watson. She also has found the sculptors, painters and photographers who use the Art Gallery appreciate the opportunity.

Through the month of July, D. Brent Miller of Granger has brought a different side of sports to the Riverfront Café with his exhibit "The Fine Art of Baseball Photography."

In his fourth year as official photographer of the South Bend Silver Hawks, Miller shoots as many as



This photograph and the one below are among those on display as part of "The Fine Art of Baseball Photography" exhibit at the Riverfront Cafe in Niles.

Tribune Photos/SANTIAGO FLORES



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8,000 photos in the course of the team's season. He selected 18 of his best for the exhibit, which he describes as "images that people may not get to see."

Miller said, "I don't consider myself a sports photographer." In fact, the work he does for the Silver Hawks is only a small portion of his body of work. He has shot editorial and documentary images, with his latest project involved photos of the St. Joseph River from the headwaters to Lake Michigan.

"I've been working on that for a year and a half," Miller said.

While he mostly uses digital camera equipment for photos like those in his exhibit, he also still uses 35 mm cameras when the occasion warrants.

"As a kid, I had a real interest in photography," explained Miller. At age 13, he received his first camera from his parents. "I thought it was the neatest thing."

Two masters degrees at the college level immersed him in photography of many types. He still likes to approach his work as a storyteller, though. And he really enjoys the chance to shoot the images which appear on the Silver Hawks' baseball cards.

"It's a real kick and really quite an honor," Miller grinned. He makes a point to get an action shot of each player for that purpose and noted, "The players all appreciate that."

Shooting his images "full frame," Miller sees his style as "part of the art of looking through the view finder." That much is evident in the photos he chose for the Riverfront Café exhibit.

From shots taken during spring training at the Arizona Diamondbacks camp in Tucson, to "Sunset at the Cove" and candid images from the 2002-2005 seasons, they are a different type of art than what is commonly seen as "sports photography."

"He has a lot of fun with it," commented Miller's wife, Lin. And even though he shoots an impressive number of photos each year, he doesn't constantly carry around his cameras, she added.

The photos Miller has shot are worth enjoying for those who climb the rustic wooden staircase to



Miller

Exhibit hours

Hours for the Riverfront Cafe, where D. Brent Miller's "The Fine Art of Baseball Photography" is on display, are: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. EDT Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and noon to 8:30 p.m. Sunday.

the Art Gallery at the Riverfront Café. For those who might not make it to the restaurant in the next few weeks, though, there will be other artists' work to view in the months to come.

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