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By MATT HUDSON/The Daily Inter Lake

## Senior Spotlight: Class of 2015

### 'I like figuring out how things function and fit together'

Sarah Paolini has an eye for detail.

It's apparent as she pulls a piece of artwork from the trunk of her car. It nearly lights up under the sunshine, rich with lines and color. It's an oil pastel painting that begins as the head of a horse but explodes into an intricate array of colors that spills out across the space.



Each individual line seems to hold its own tone, and there are thousands of them.

Art is a passion for Paolini, but it may not become a career. Coming up on graduation Friday night, the Stillwater Christian School senior will leave school with an impressive academic array. She will enter college with a focus in human biology.

She jokes about avoiding the "starving artist" path, just as long as she can keep the latter title.

"I want to be able to keep drawing," Paolini, 18, said.

Her favorite piece is a large oil painting of a ballerina. She said it took her a couple of months to finish and she wasn't sure about the medium. Colored pencils are her most consistent tool, but she hasn't been shy about using charcoal, pastels and other forms.

But the ballerina piece turned out nicely and became one of the many pieces she has sold over the years.

Paolini said she always had an interest in art, which takes after her mother, Theresa.

"Her love of art kind of transferred to me," she said.

She honed the practice at Stillwater, where Paolini said that she was able to work with a great art teacher, Barbara Beckwith. Her works have made regular appearances at the school's annual art expositions.

She earned high marks in art class, but that wasn't the only area.

At the high school level of Stillwater, Paolini earned a 4.0 grade-point average all four years and has been named the valedictorian of her class. She took Advanced Placement courses in literature and calculus and earned college credit in concurrent courses of chemistry, human anatomy and physiology.

Biology is her favorite subject.

She said that it captured her interest at a young age. Much like in her artwork, Paolini is interested in the details.

"I like figuring out how things function and how they fit together," she said.

Paolini talked about the minute details, such as the body process linking the respiratory and circulatory systems. The small capillaries serve as tiny gateways between the lungs and blood stream, collecting oxygen that enriches arteries. It's a small detail, perhaps, but an important one.

It's this interest that Paolini will follow in college. She's headed for the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, a Christian School in Belton, Texas. She plans to major in biology.

Paolini said that she's keeping her options open for various biology or medicine fields.

But that's not all.

Paolini plans to play volleyball for the Mary Hardin-Baylor Crusaders. She played on the varsity team at Stillwater all four years. That team placed at the state level every year.

This summer, she will travel to New Orleans to play with the state Junior Olympics team.

Entering her last week of school at Stillwater was a special feeling for Paolini. She said that her class of 21 seniors is a close bunch. Closer still are the seven students, including Paolini, who have been at the school since kindergarten.

She said that it isn't shock that's taking over when she thinks about leaving the school she has attended for 13 years. It's something else. Bittersweetness, perhaps. She said that when she was young, she would look up to the older kids and couldn't picture herself in their shoes. Yet here she is.

That environment, she said, was more than just a detail. "The atmosphere at Stillwater is so cool," she said. "It just feels like family."

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