

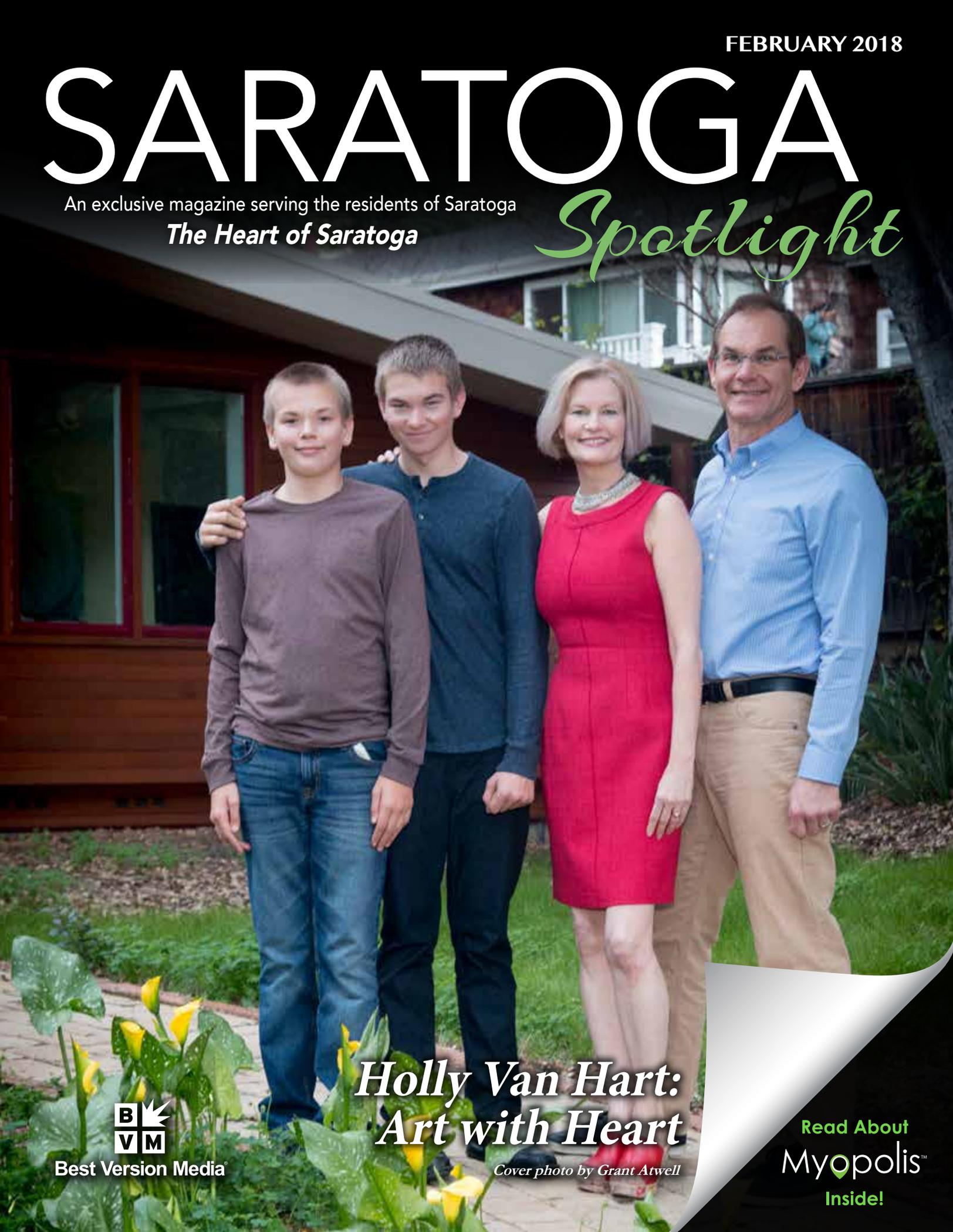
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SARATOGA

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Saratoga

The Heart of Saratoga

Spotlight



*Holly Van Hart:
Art with Heart*

Cover photo by Grant Atwell



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Holly Van Hart:

Art with Heart

Photos by Grant Atwell

By Genevieve Laucher

Holly Van Hart has always been passionate about painting, but it wasn't until five years ago that she turned what used to be her hobby into her full-time career. Holly, who lives with her husband Ike van Cruyningen and their two sons, Skyler and Erik, has already experienced success with her art and has a very exciting year ahead.

Holly grew up in New York, and was surrounded by art as a child. Her mom, an artist, taught Holly and her younger brother and sister all different types of art. Holly remembers doing calligraphy, ceramics, crochet, playing instruments, and more. However, Holly didn't pursue art in school, and went to Rutgers for her undergrad, then Stanford for grad school and earned degrees in engineering. It was at Stanford that she met her husband, Ike, who was earning his doctoral degree in mechanical engineering. She also fell in love with California and the Bay Area in particular. Although she

briefly moved back to New Jersey, she soon returned to the Bay Area permanently.

Holly sees engineering as a creative field too, in that you have the ability to create something new. During her years in engineering at high tech companies, Holly was lucky enough to travel, and saw many different countries around Europe and Asia. Once she got settled into her job, she found she had some free time for art. She decided she wanted to paint, and began taking classes at night. She spent her free time at night and on the weekends painting with oils and acrylics, and really fell in love with it. About twelve years ago, she began exhibiting some of her artwork. She won some awards, and even sold some paintings.

Art was becoming a bigger and bigger part of Holly's life, and she finally decided that if she didn't pursue it full-time, she would regret it. She left her career in high tech in 2013 and switched to her art career full-time. Even though Holly



had been painting for years now, this was a big change, and she had to learn the business side of the art world as quickly as possible. This involves researching galleries to see where her art would fit in, making connections, and entering her paintings in competitions.

In 2013, she entered in the California statewide Painting Competition, hosted by the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara. Her painting made it into the museum, which she was thrilled about. When Holly showed up at the artists' reception, the woman checking her in excitedly told her to go into the exhibit room. It turned out that Holly's painting, along with one other, had been awarded first prize!

Holly's momentum kept going from there, with solo exhibitions at the Triton Museum, the University of California, San Francisco, and at her alma mater, Stanford University. Although she experiments with different painting techniques, all of Holly's paintings have an abstracted nature theme, including fields, forests, flowers, nests, and trees. Holly loves being outside in nature, and draws inspiration from nature's imagery to convey her message—that there is abundance in life and limitless possibilities for us to embrace if we choose to.

Besides having her art in galleries, Holly also has her paintings for sale on the Houzz website, an online community focused on interior design and decorating. She asks people who buy her work to review it. She received



all five-star reviews, and was awarded Best of Houzz in 2016 and 2017. Her paintings are also in the collections of top executives, both locally and around the world, who discovered her art at her shows, on Houzz, and through word of mouth.

Holly celebrated multiple accomplishments in 2017. In addition to Best of Houzz, she was also awarded with the Clark Hulings Fund Fellowship for Visual Artists, which extends to this year too. Furthermore, Holly published a book of her artwork, called *Nature's Inspirations*, which pairs 25 of her favorite paintings with inspirational quotes from a wide variety of people, from Mother Teresa to Beyonce to Thomas Edison. You can download her book free as an ebook from hollyvanhart.com/inspirations or order a printed copy from Amazon.

When she is not painting, Holly enjoys spending time with family and friends hiking, mountain biking, and traveling. She and her family recently traveled to Palm Desert, where they did a lot of hiking. They also like to do a big family trip every other year. Their destinations have included Chile, Belize, Croatia, Italy, Holland, Australia, and Mexico. Some favorite local spots include Rancho San Antonio and Montalvo.

Ike still works as a mechanical engineer and currently is working on a startup company in the drone space called

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RESIDENT FEATURE



LineSpect. Besides working on and sometimes testing the drones with their sons, Ike is also skilled at building and remodeling houses. Their current home in Saratoga is the third that he has redone—they bought the home five years ago, and Ike took it down to the studs and completely redid the whole home to be modern and feature many windows, tying indoors with outdoors. Before this home, he also built a brand new house in Portola Valley and did a significant remodel in Hillsborough.

Holly and Ike’s son Skyler is 15 and a sophomore at Saratoga High, and their son Erik is 14 and an 8th grader at Redwood Middle School. Both boys love playing soccer, and Ike has enjoyed coaching them and helping out. Holly is involved with Redwood Middle School as an art docent, and is on Saratoga Education Foundation’s Program Advisory Committee with Tamami Honma. Last year, Holly was also an art docent for all of the Los Gatos elementary schools, where she talked to the students about what she does as an artist.

Holly also volunteers as a guest host interviewer for Silicon Valley Talk Art TV, which is tied to Silicon Valley Open Studios. She was interviewed on the show a while back, and now enjoys interviewing other artists several times per year. Because of her love of nature, Holly also gives back to the community through two environmental organizations, the Nature Conservancy and ICE 911, located in Menlo Park. Holly used her social media platform to spread the word

about ICE 911 by interviewing the organization’s founder on Facebook Live.

2018 is shaping up to be a busy and exciting year for Holly. Coming up soon, she has a solo exhibition at the X-Gallery in Beverly Hills beginning in March. She has a show in San Anselmo’s Desta Gallery in May, is participating in Silicon Valley’s Open Studios as she does every May, and her work is being shown at the A.R.T. Fair in Taipei, Taiwan also in May. Holly is really excited about all of this, because she enjoys doing shows and getting her art to new places and people and meeting collectors. She has been painting a lot so that she has enough work for all of these shows, and still needs to paint more!

Holly’s paintings reflect her own creativity and positive spirit, and also the inspiration she draws from the Silicon Valley and its limitless possibilities. See her art at www.hollyvanhart.com, or on her Facebook and Instagram, both @hollyvanhart.

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