

Meet the cartoonist

IRENE OLDS

This January marks 30 years that Irene Olds has been drawing original cartoons for the Brown County Democrat. From doodling on papers in eighth-grade art class to drawing portraits at Village Green and later receiving Hoosier State Press awards for the Democrat, Olds has been committed to cartooning for Brown County.

“I’m amazed at myself that I’ve stuck with something for 30 years,” said Olds. “It’s amazing to give voice to people in the community who are too shy to speak up and to tickle people and bring them joy.”

Olds had a studio in Village Green where she worked on drawing portraits and entering art shows. Bob Bainter, a cartoon artist, told her she could take over his job one day. She said she wasn’t funny enough and he assured her that not only was she but all she needed to do was listen to people to get her gag lines.

“Two years later Bainter passed away, and I decided to go ahead and follow through,” said Olds. “And sure enough, I sent it in and the Democrat published the cartoon. So, the following week I submitted again, and it’s been 30 years.”



Left: Olds in her shared studio in the Village Green Building with Brown County artist and dear friend Terri Schultz. This was right around the time she began working as the cartoonist for the Democrat in 1993. Right: Recent photo of Olds in Sept. 2023 still making a drawing board everywhere she goes. She was working on a cartoon for the Democrat while she was in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. STORY BY ABBIE GRESSLEY | BROWN COUNTY DEMOCRAT | PHOTOS COURTESY OF IRENE OLDS

She said she hadn’t ever taken it seriously until the Democrat published her first cartoon. Olds’ work has routinely won