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Firm distributes local artist's cards

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Fifteen years ago, Deborah Cavanaugh received a Mother's Day gift from her children which would not only change her life, but affect many others. Her children gave her a toy-store box of watercolors, and their mom never stopped painting.

Cavanaugh's artwork is now shown in more than 50 galleries from Florida to Maine and is owned in private collections in 11 different countries, and her distributor, Emery-Burton, sells more than 200 cards featuring her artwork, which can be found at specialty gift stores. Her artwork preaches inspiration and hope, something she knows very much about.

Cavanaugh said she experienced a rough childhood. Her family was constantly moving, more than 25 times by the day she started school. Her father usually had three different jobs, and sickness and hospitalizations were common in her family, which often forced her to live with relatives when she was younger.

"In my art," said Cavanaugh, "I am often contemplating 'what is home,' and painting both about the life I have in my own home and creating the missed childhood I have always longed for."

She said it has made her sensitive to both how incredibly difficult and enormously beautiful just living every day is.

She kept painting when art galleries were shutting down everywhere and after her studio burnt to the ground. She kept painting after her father and brother passed away in rapid succession. She paints to help others and to encourage them.

Cavanaugh wears a Viking ship pendant around her neck at all times and puts

one on the back of her cards; she says it represents bravery and pushing forward despite hard conditions.

"If I could do anything," Cavanaugh said, "I would travel the country encouraging folks that it is going to be okay."

It was this optimism, and the help of her son, Hunter Powers, that led her to the National Stationary Show in New York City, earlier this year. Cavanaugh stayed at a YMCA and displayed her cards and artwork from a rented booth at the show, receiving a great response.

She says some of her best compliments were people comparing her artwork to Matisse and Van Gogh. Her card line was chosen as one of the best new products at the show, and she met with her current distributor, which is putting her cards in stores.
