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Business News

Artist Gives New Life to Little Bird

By Don Woodyard

Surrounded by ants and too weak to move, a baby bird awaited certain death on the front porch of artist Ann Massey's Santa Teresa home.

Walking up to the front door of her home, she spotted the helpless bird which apparently had fallen from under the eaves of her home.

Gently she picked up the bird and carried it inside and began feeding it a paste of bread crumbs and water. At first there was no response; life flickered in the bird which barely moved and took no nourishment. But soon her patience and love evoked a remarkable change in the tiny creature which soon began taking a little of the food. Its wings fluttered tentatively, and it moved around in the palm of her hand.

See little Bird on page 8



Ann Massey

Little Bird from page 7

Soon "Row," (short for sparrow) was chirping merrily. It survived the crisis and gaining strength every day in the sanctuary of her new home.

What Massey did in her own way to sustain life in the bird is perfect example—a microcosm — of what the business/artist partnership is really all about and what makes it work so well in El Paso. It is not a condescending, patronizing, pat-on-the-head relationship in which business doles out a few dollars to a city art museum or a starving artist. In this maturing relationship, both sides benefit greatly.

But in the case of Massey, the tables were turned a little bit. The artist became the supporter of the helpless bird which desperately needed help to live and grow. The bird became the performing artist whose joyful singing paid Massey back a thousandfold.

"Without the support of business it is difficult for the artist," she says. "As the business support us, we support them," she added still holding the little bird and stroking it softly. "If not supported, they go elsewhere." But she is quick to point out that there is a lot more support from business for the arts, a greater awareness. She praises Sierra Medical Center for its generous support of the arts.

"When art flourishes, people come in, and business flourishes. People tend to come where there is art...and El Paso has incredible artists."

Massey says artists often neglect the essential business aspect of their work. "Art is business." She has a small office in her own home, and is opening a gallery, Massey Fine Arts, in Santa Teresa. She expresses her art in a special dimension.

"Art is communication; I communicate with my life; I communicate people."

With a warm smile she adds, "Talent is God's gift to you; how you use it is your gift to God—and others."