

# Chris Berish finds the inner animal in trees and stones

By CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK  
Post Correspondent

DALLAS — Who knows what woodland spirit inspires Chris Berish. Who cares?

His Back Mountain neighbors love to see each new creation and some have asked him to carve up their tree trunks and stumps, just as he has done with many of his own.

"I just look at a tree and see an image and pretty much picture something in that tree," Berish said in explanation. Only certain tees — or certain rocks — become bears, squirrels, or chipmunks.

"There's a rock up there I could pretty much carve a turtle out of," he said on a recent afternoon. "It's a flat rock sticking up where I built the stone wall, but I haven't got to it yet."

An avid hunter and lover of nature originally from Plymouth, his visions have turned a modest corner lot in Dallas into an outdoor sculpture garden and landscaper's delight.

Berish moved to Dallas two years ago to enjoy a quiet neighborhood and more of the country scene. The previous owners had not done much to improve the property along West Center Hill Road in Dallas, so Berish has constructed a two-tiered water pond system with a creek, and carved up the tree stumps. The stumps are chain-sawed and then fine chiseled to resemble men, bears or other animals.

"It's nice to work with a chisel, but I like the chain saw best. You can't let the chain saw control you, though, you have to have steady hands or you'll cut

too far and there's no way to bring it back."

He fondly displays his "mistake bear." It's the one with the

pointy ears. A Polynesian-looking sculpture was supposed to be a bear or a woman but the trunk was too skinny. It (or

she/he) had breasts and a big belly. Berish now dresses him up for the holidays.

Berish explains his compulsion humorously. "I was born in the woods one day, and could never sit still, and I love to be outdoors." So one day, sitting in the woods waiting to catch bear with a friend, he whittled a small bear out of black walnut. But the desire to carve was really launched when he saw chain saw carvers at Knoebel's Amusement Park.

Another influence and supporter of his wood carving pas-

*"There's a rock up there I could pretty much carve a turtle out of."*

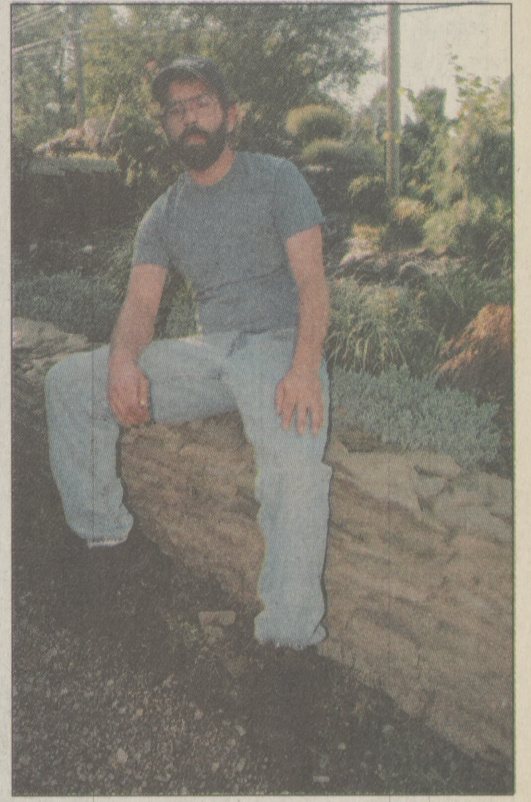
Chris Berish  
Dallas

sion is his girlfriend, Kim Brown, a rousing fan who challenges Berish, a car detailer, to tackle bigger projects. "He's always busy outside doing something, like his job isn't enough," she said.

Berish admits to some inherited talent from his father, but has never had any formal training. "It's just a fun hobby and a challenge to make something."

Neighbors and friends give him second opinions, ideas, and donate materials. Berish is almost ready to stain and polyurethane the 6-foot carved bear that stands in his yard. But not everyone sees the same thing he does. One woman drove by and said, "That's a cute bunny you're doing there."

Berish plans more carved bears for his yard.



POST PHOTOS/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Chris Berish takes a chisel to a tree stump that he roughed out using a chain saw, left. In center, his "mistake bear" that became a man (woman?) with distinct Polynesian overtones, center. At right, he started with the stone wall and water garden.

## Volunteer

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very rewarding," said Banks, the mother of five children.

Banks is the daughter of John and Pat Luke of Kingston Township. She grew up near Frances Slocum State Park, attended Gate of Heaven Elementary School and Dallas junior and senior high schools. She will graduate in May from King's College with a double major in psychology and neuroscience.

*"Boys or girls, whoever you work with, they're great."*

Margie Banks  
Dallas

In addition to attending college, sometimes full-time, for the last eight years and raising five children, she volunteered with Cub Scout Pack 155, was assistant leader and leader for her two older daughters' Girl Scout troops, and started a Brownie troop for her two younger daughters, which she led through Junior Scouts and now into two Cadette troops.

Her children, and therefore, Margie, have participated in sports ranging from softball and baseball to basketball, field hockey and wrestling. Moreover, she took a turn as stand manager for Back Mountain Baseball, started and managed two travel field hockey teams and delivered newspapers for the Times Leader for over two years.

She has taken her scouts on numerous day trips and camping excursions. Her car, pur-



POST PHOTO/M.B. GILLIGAN

Margie Banks is pictured with her youngest daughter, Amanda, at a recent Girl Scout meeting.

chased in February, already has more than 13,000 miles on it. "My mother was a Cub Scout den mother and my father coached mini football and little league," said Banks. "They were always signing us up to help out at the church too," she said in reference to her four brothers and one sister. "I was a Girl Scout through Cadettes and earned the First Class Award, which was one of the highest you could receive."

"Mama Marge," as she is affectionately known to many young area girls, is currently looking for an internship in her field and has plans to continue her education through a doctoral program. "I hope to be a clinician and would like to work with children and put all of my

volunteer experience to good use," she said.

Banks wholeheartedly endorses volunteer work. "I really enjoy the kids. They are each unique and special and it keeps me young. It also keeps you informed about what is going on in your children's lives," said Margie. "Sometimes I think people are just rushing from the start to the finish, but you have to enjoy it now because when it's gone, it's gone."

Banks lives in Dallas with her husband, Chris. Their five children are: Tim, 21, Jessica, 19, Susan, 18, Becca, 13, and Amanda, 12. "Boys or girls, whoever you work with, they're great. I don't do it for any recognition, I do it for the kids," said Banks.

### Editor's Note:

The Post will be publishing an occasional series on the contributions volunteers make to our community. If you know someone who would make a good subject, let us know by dropping a e-mail to [dallaspost@leader.net](mailto:dallaspost@leader.net) or calling 970-7157.

## Puppies help students at Dallas El learn to read

In conjunction with the SPCA, students at Dallas Elementary who are having difficulty learning to read, will now be a part of the puppy pals program. Beginning October 10, the school will be hosting dogs from various locations to work as reading mentors. The Puppy Pals Program, created by the guidance counselor, Betsy Jerome and Sharon Hartshorne, reading specialist, has children read to the visiting puppies. The goal of the program is to make reading fun for the children and improve reading scores at the same time.

The Puppy Pals program meets one time per quarter.

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