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14-year-old chalk artist and teacher Allison Olstad, center, checks out the progress that Abby, left, and Campbell have made on their drawings at a Prior Lake summer camp.

PHOTO BY EDEN TELLER



FILE PHOTO

Groom Ever Estrada walks a horse to the walking ring at Canterbury Park in 2018.

Short on help

Worker shortage forces area employers to get creative

BY RACHEL BLOOD
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Familiar signs plaster the windows of businesses and services all over Scott and Carver counties: Help Wanted. Now Hiring. Apply Here.

A large increase in open positions and a drastic lack of job-seekers make for a worker shortage that spans all industries across the two counties, straining small businesses and community service areas alike.

Scott County Business Development Specialist Jo Foust said 4,486 jobs within the county had been posted online within a 30-day period this summer.

Carver County Income Support Manager Kate Probert Fagundes provided a Talent-Neuron report that listed 9,455 job postings in the county between Dec. 1, 2020 and June

Help to 11 ▶

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Chalk it up

Artist, 14, specializes in sidewalk masterpieces

BY EDEN TELLER
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Though she's not even old enough for a driver's permit, Allison Olstad, of Jordan, has crossed state lines to compete in art festivals that draw competitors from across the United States and even internationally.

Unfortunately for fans, none of that artwork exists anymore: It was all washed away in the first rain after the chalk art festival.

Her first introduction to the ephemeral medium was at a summer camp with Minnesota muralist Sean McCann. She had

worked with chalk art before, Allison said, but after the summer camp, her creativity "just took off."

"It's super relaxing for me and I can really express myself without talking about it," she explained.

At chalk festivals, though, talking to passersby is a core part of the experience.

When she first chalking with an audience at age 10, Allison answered the crowd's questions, but didn't know how to elaborate or draw the conversations out, she said. At the dozens of festivals she's attended since, she's learned how to answer questions "to have more of a conversation," she added.

The payoff is seeing strangers engage

with each other and bond over their shared love of art, like at the first Arbor Lakes chalk festival she attended.

"You could tell they weren't together but you could hear them talking to each other," Allison recalled.

"It's been fun to watch her grow and change in her own art," said Stephanie Olstad, Allison's mother. "I definitely think it's helped her grow in communication and public speaking."

Allison's next event is the Arbor Lakes Chalkfest on Main Street in Maple Grove over Labor Day weekend. Her first step at

Chalk to 11 ▶