

# Michigan Glass Month

Nursery rhymes are a visual treat at exhibit in Canton

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Tom Newton hangs a pieces in the front window of the theater. The exhibit also includes a series of nursery rhymes in stained glass from the former St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills.

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This piece has several different styles combined. It may have been used as a sample piece by a glass studio. / Bill Bresler | staff photographer



**ZOOM**

This photo shows the kindergarten room at the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills with original stained glass nursery rhyme windows.



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This window hung in the St. Vincent Sarah Fisher Home. / Bill Bresler | staff photographer

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Walk into the lobby at the Village Theater at Cherry Hill in Canton and you might find yourself looking for pews.

“It’s just like a church,” said Tom Newton, who placed stained glass art in the venue last week.

The exhibit, coinciding with Michigan Glass Month, runs April 1-29, and includes a variety of stained glass pieces, in addition to tools and sketches that show the designing, glass making and assembling process. Prominent in the collection is a series of 10 panels depicting nursery rhymes that originally were installed in the kindergarten room at the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, in Farmington Hills.

“We were able to hang in sunlight. Sunlight is very important to stained glass. It’s dynamic and changing from morning until night,” said Newton, who maintains a studio at

the Glass Academy in Dearborn. "That was one of the motivators when I was asked to do this exhibit. They have a beautiful lobby. I said this is absolutely perfect for stained glass, especially during the day."

Last year when the Academy exhibited glass at the theater, Newton offered to loan a few nursery rhyme panels to the display for "extra zip."

"I took four out there and we hung them and moved them away from the wall so light could get behind them. It was really well received. When the gallery asked me if I was interested in doing it this year. It was an easy decision."

He brought all 10 nursery rhyme windows to the theater, along with other stained glass and the drawings, called "cartoons" that formed the basis of the Mother Goose art. Former orphanage

Newton, a Dearborn resident has become the informal keeper of the nursery rhyme glass for the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, which relocated to Detroit in 2006 after state funding for residential foster care programs dried up. Today, the nonprofit organization primarily runs tutoring programs for adults and children.

The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul originally founded the Center as a kindergarten for orphans in the mid-1800s in what is now the 12 Mile-Inkster Road area of Farmington Hills. The nuns' St. Vincent Academy evolved into a full orphanage, but was destroyed by fire in 1928. Charles T. Fisher of Fisher Body and his wife, Sarah, donated funds for a new orphanage which opened in 1929. The stained glass for the kindergarten room was made that same year.

Made in Detroit

Newton likes the quality of the glass windows and their secular theme.

"They are simplistic," he said, referring to the design. "And very attractive. The colors are rich and the subject is every day."

The Detroit Stained Glass Works originally crafted a 40 nursery rhyme windows for the Center. Some were destroyed and others damaged when the windows were moved to a gymnasium in the building.

Local artists began restoring them in 1986. The Center owns 10 of the original pieces. A few others are located at Providence Hospital and the Daughters of Charity retained a few.

Newton bought the original sketches for the nursery rhymes, along with other glass pieces and items from the Detroit Stained Glass Works when it closed in 1970. He had no information about the whimsical windows.

“I had these wonderful drawings of nursery rhymes and did a display with them for Michigan Glass Month. I asked if anyone had information on the drawings, I'd like to know.”

He received a call and invitation to view the corresponding stained glass pieces from the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center.

“They showed me the original windows. It was neat,” he recalled.

#### New mission

Diane Renaud, CEO and director of The Education Experience at the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Detroit, said the stained glass exhibit is a “window of opportunity” to raise awareness of the 168-year-old organization. Now nonprofit run by a board of trustees, rather than the nuns, the Center offers tutoring for first through third graders in northwest Detroit, as well as GED preparation for adults at four locations in the city. It relies on fundraising and donations to continue its free services to the public.

“The windows are symbolic for us because they are a snapshot of time in our ongoing evolution,” Renaud said. “We’ve always evolved to meet the needs of the community. I understand that the audience that saw it (last year) was excited to know what our latest incarnation had become. “

The exhibit is open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Friday, by appointment and during public performances at the theater, which is located at 50400 Cherry Hill Road, in Canton; ((734) 395-5300 or (734) 394-5460.

The nursery rhyme windows are included in the Michigan Stained Glass Census at [www.michiganstainedglass.org](http://www.michiganstainedglass.org). For more about Michigan Glass Month, visit For more about Michigan Glass Month, visit [www.michigananglass.org](http://www.michigananglass.org). For more about St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, visit [www.svsfcenter.org](http://www.svsfcenter.org).