

## Oral Surgeon's Artistic Talents Benefit Cats

**In CAT FANCY's November issue we interviewed soap star Julia Rose Barr on her animal activism. Meet her husband and see how he contributes to improving cats' lives.**

*By Sandy Meyer*

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When one thinks of a great artist, an oral surgeon isn't the first image to come to mind.

"I've always been interested in art, but I was discouraged from it in junior high school," says Richard Hirschlag, DMD, an oral surgeon in Dayton, N.J., and husband to soap opera actress Julia Rose Barr. "Math and science were always easy for me. I was encouraged to pursue them professionally. I planned on medical school, but was encouraged into dental care so I could be my own boss."

So what drew Hirschlag back to his childhood interest in art?

"Julia and I were on vacation seven years ago in Hawaii and I just started drawing again," he says.

Most of Hirschlag's artwork focuses on landscapes, figures and portraits in charcoals and pastels. A few years later, Hirschlag sketched the family's dog, Nellie. Her image was framed and hung up in their home and guests frequently commented on the sketch. Soon friends and relatives requested portraits of their pets. Most were done in pastels, some in watercolor. Six of the portraits adorn Hirschlag's office.

"Julia's always had a soft spot for animals," Hirschlag says. After completing many pet portraits for friends and family members, someone suggested that putting several of the animal portraits into a box set and selling them to benefit animals. The first batch of six designs came out in June 2005. The Barney note card pack features Barney, Lucas, Our Lucy, Abendigo, Magic, Tara and Leonard and Ours. Following the success of the Barney pack, Hirschlag released the Ollie note card pack, which features Ollie, Marlowe and Griffin, Our Nellie, Jessica and Spike, Buddy, Jesse, Phoenix and Jade.

All the animals are from people the couple knows, which Hirschlag says makes the project that much more special.

"I would do it anyway," Hirschlag says about his pet portraits. "All sense of time disappears. It's a sense of release. I keep a copy, but originals go to the pet owners." Nonetheless, he gets great satisfaction that his hobby helps animals.

When asked about plans for more note card packs, Hirschlag said there are no definite plans. He does have six unused pet portraits, however, and has about five birds and their babies in the works.

"It's a lot of fun," Hirschlag says about his art. "A great release."

For more information or to order a set of cards, visit [www.juliarosebarr.com/notecards.htm](http://www.juliarosebarr.com/notecards.htm).

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