

Island artist designs postcards of Tall Ships

By Michaela Kennedy

Artist Jason Hamel makes pictures as pretty as postcards. In fact, his designs are postcards, and his new line, the Tall Ships Challenge, is currently available around town.

Hamel also has an additional photograph collection, which will follow in the wake of the Tall Ships showcase. Postcards celebrating 350 years of Jamestown are expected in the stores by the summer season.

Hamel and his father, Bill, established a family graphics design business based out of their home on Pemberton Avenue about two years ago. "He's the brains behind it all," Bill said about his son.

From retail signs to skateboard sizzle, Jason spends his day in front of his computer creating a spectrum of graphic styles. Bill assists him in marketing and other business-related duties.

A few months ago, the father and son team came up with an idea to highlight the ships expected in Newport during the Tall Ships festival at the end of June. Bill saw a press release that announced three more ships to be added to the list of maritime vessels coming to Narragansett Bay. Through a few telephone calls, the idea took an unexpected twist.

They made contact with photographer Clint Clemens through the event sponsor, Amica Insurance. Bill laughed when he remembered Clemens saying to him on the first phone call, "Are you psychic?" Clemens was looking for a graphic artist at the time to collaborate on postcards. The timing was perfect



Jason Hamel in his island studio.

Photo by Michaela Kennedy

for the Hamels.

Jason might not agree that his timing was always perfect, though his work room reflects a strive towards perfection. Bicycle motocross (BMX) trophies crowd a shelf the length of one wall. He discovered his love of BMX racing and freestyle cycling at the age of nine and spent the next 10 years perfecting his edge on the course and winning a stream of awards along the way.

The largest trophy, the BMX bike suspended over his bed, hangs as a daily reminder of his drive and success on the motocross track – until an accident on the race course left him with quadriplegia, a complete paralysis from the neck down, at the age of 19.

Hamel, now 35, looked up to his bike and smiled. He recognized his drive which keeps his successes flowing.

"I was an artist before the accident," Jason noted, recalling his studies in fine arts at that time. After six months in the hospital and another six months of grueling rehabilitation, Jason decided to go back to school. He completed a bachelor's degree in graphic design from Rhode Island College, and has been taking on projects ever since.

Jason and Bill bubble with energy as they talk about their success with Hamel Graphics. They both are quick, though, to show gratitude to others in the community who have provided personal support. Jason especially thanked

Julie Grednuk, a friend who has made a noted difference in his daily life, and services from Consistent Care. "Without them, life would be tough," Bill added.

Hamel specialty postcards are available at Jamestown Designs and Baker's Pharmacy.

For more information about Hamel Graphics, visit online at <http://www.myspace.com/hamelgraphics> or <http://members.cox.net/cky2k71/>.

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