

Butter than the rest: Litchfield's Gerry Kulzer to sculpt Princess Kay

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Litchfield artist and teacher Gerry Kulzer will soon have his talent of sculpting displayed in a very different way.

Kulzer will create the annual Minnesota State Fair butter sculptures of the 10 candidates competing for the title of Princess Kay of the Milky Way.

He has been working with current butter sculptor Linda Christensen for the past year.

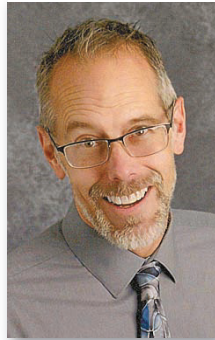
"I have always been interested in the butter sculpture at the fair, and back in 2017, I think someone contacted me saying Midwest Dairy is thinking of a transition plan for when Christensen decides to retire," Kulzer said.

"In 2018 Theresa Reps from Midwest Dairy asked if I'd "audition" by carving a likeness into a 50 lb block of butter the day before the fair. When I got there, they said they had an extra 90 lb block if I'd like to try that. I jumped at the opportunity. Alyssa, who was the Program Manager with Midwest Dairy, was the model."

Kulzer said that he doesn't know how many other artists he was competing against, but he was selected to take over the program.

"Last year, I worked directly with Christensen. She showed me what she would do on one side of the portrait, then I'd do the same, practicing her techniques, on the other side. The finished portrait was surpris-

ingly coherent. I've never worked so effortlessly on a collaborative piece before. Linda is an amazing person to work with."



Gerry Kulzer
SUBMITTED PHOTO

This year the plan was for Christensen to sculpt the majority of the heads while Kulzer worked on the others. However, with the pandemic still being an issue and travel restrictions being in place, Christensen decided it was safer to stay in California.

Kulzer said, "I'm sad that Linda can't be here with us, but she'll join us via video feed from California periodically. I'm a little nervous because even though Linda is a petite woman, I have some large shoes to fill. She has been doing this for nearly 50 years!"

The 67th Princess Kay of the Milky Way will be crowned August 12 during a private banquet for the 10 candidates and their families. The ceremony will be live-streamed through the Princess Kay Facebook page at 7:45 pm.

Kulzer will begin sculpting the next day at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, starting



Program Manager Alyssa Olson models for Kulzer in 2018.

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with the newly crowned Princess Kay. He will then sculpt the other nine other finalists in subsequent days, finishing the final sculpture August 22.

Maggie Meyer of Grove City will represent Meeker County as one of the 10 candidates vying for the title of Princess Kay of the Milky Way. She is the daughter of Greg and Patti Meyer.

Kulzer said that he is looking forward to talking with each Princess Kay finalist as he works on their portrait. Kulzer, who grew up on a farm, said he understands the hard work it takes to be a farm kid. "It will be fun to compare how things have changed from my time growing up on the farm to modern-day farming," he commented.

The public will not be able to view the butter sculpting in

person, but they will be able to watch live updates streamed on the Princess Kay Facebook page each day.

Viewers will be able to interact virtually with Princess Kay and the other finalists during these streams and ask them questions.

Christensen will retire after 50 years of sculpting the butter heads after the 2021 state fair, and then will officially pass over the duties to Kulzer as a sculptor for the program.