

6-year-old creates exceptional artwork

By **MICAIAH WISE BILGER**
Sentinel reporter

When Rocco Roth's parents watched their toddler teach himself to read before age 3, they knew their little boy was gifted.

But they did not fully realize the extent of their child's talents until his drawings were reviewed by a Boston College researcher who described them as "several years ahead of his peers."

The now 6-year-old Rocco — who likes to be known by his middle name, Valentino, too — collects many of his drawing subjects from the farmland and forests around the family's old stone farmhouse near Beaver Springs.

"I'm a naturalist," he says, pointing to himself proudly.

His mother, Amanda Mancino, hands Rocco a handful of his pencil drawings. On the white sheets of paper, his small hand has captured detailed images of crabs, dinosaurs, vegetables, insects and other living things.

Some of them are copies of drawings from books, others are pieces from nature and still more are pulled from his imagination.

His mother points to a drawing of a carrot and a parsnip, vegetables that Rocco sketched after plucking them from his garden. Amanda says she and her husband, Nigel, are not gardeners, but Rocco took the initiative and decided to plant the vegetables himself.

"I planted these carrot seeds," Rocco says, excitedly waving his hands as he speaks. "And I found something else (too). What is that? That's not a carrot, I said. I realized it was a parsnip."

And he decided to draw pictures of both. Beside the sketches are labels with the plant specimen name and length.

Rocco's carrot drawing displays advanced artistic skills when compared to a typical 6-year-old, Boston College researcher Ellen Winner told the family.

Amanda says Winner told them that when an average 6-year-old is asked to draw a



Sentinel photo by MICAIAH WISE BILGER

Rocco Valentino Roth, 6, shows his interpretation of a painting by Salvador Dali. The exceptionally talented young artist participated in a Boston College research project that followed 13 young drawing prodigies.

"I'm a naturalist ... I like to draw people's faces, too."

— Rocco Valentino Roth

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