

# USM alumna to present illustrations at exhibit

## Staff report

The University of Saint Mary will open its 2025-26 Goppert Gallery season with "Timeless Fashion," an exhibition from alumna Sally Dill, a New York City-based artist.

The exhibition includes 20 illustrations along with three supporting pieces produced by Dill in her 1965-67 fashion illustration courses taught by Sister Mary Rebecca Conner, past chair of the art department.

Dill came across this body of work in her archives, which prompted her to reach out to the Saint Mary Art Department. She recalled the words of Donald Tefft, her other art instructor during her college years, in which he implored students, "never throw away your artwork."

"Timeless Fashion" will be on display from Oct. 14 through Nov. 25 in the Xavier Hall Goppert Gallery on campus, 4100 S. 4th St. USM will host an opening

reception on Oct. 14 from 2-6 p.m. in the Goppert Gallery, and Dill will give an artist talk at 4 p.m. Live music from Joseph Dorsten and refreshments will be provided.

The 20 illustrations on paper are done in the media of ink, charcoal, watercolor, graphite, oil pastel and fabric. They are archivally matted and framed in maple under plexiglass. In support of three illustrations, there are small, framed pieces of original magazine clippings showing the costume.

All sales of the artwork will be donated to the USM Art Department.

Dill is a 1967 graduate of Saint Mary College with a bachelor's degree in art and a minor in secondary education. She taught art on the secondary and elementary levels in Blue Springs, Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri, and New York City. She settled in New York and embarked on a career as a studio artist in the late 1980s to the present.

# Kansas town embraces 'generation worth of improvements'

## Wire report

De Soto is moving forward with plans for major developments even though Panasonic may delay full production at its new electric vehicle battery plant.

The newest developments include plans for hundreds of housing options with apartments, homes and a hotel, in addition to the opening of a data center and an expansion to Merck Animal Health's facility.

De Soto is a town of about 6,500 people, so the planned hiring of 4,000 people at Panasonic, in addition to new housing

and other businesses coming to town, means at least an additional 60% of people spending time at local businesses and using roads and other town infrastructure. Some residents are coping with the changes to the town's character and desire for more information about environmental impacts from new development.

De Soto Mayor Rick Walker said he is confident Panasonic will meet its obligations and that his opinion about the project hasn't changed.

"It was good for the city when we first saw it. It's still good for the city," he said. "I mean,

it's a generation worth of improvements that were built in a span of three years, and that's just completely unimaginable that we would have been able to do that. But it's happened and it's here and no regrets, no second thoughts."

The \$4 billion Panasonic plant was expected to reach full production by March 2027 but reports suggest that goal has been delayed due to the dropping electric car sales and federal policies that don't support green energy.

Sarah King, Panasonic Energy chief people officer, and Panasonic spokesperson Alison

Klooster did not respond directly to questions about when full production would begin but said they are still planning to reach the original planned output.

The factory has hired just over 1,200 employees, including production workers and support staff, and is still on track for 4,000 total employees, King said.

King said employees are still being hired from within a 50-mile radius of De Soto.

De Soto's 2023 Panasonic development agreement included a tax increment financing district for the company, which uses

property tax collected from the increased value of the development to pay for costs associated with needed infrastructure improvements.

The agreement provided about \$229 million for public infrastructure projects like roadway construction, water treatment storage, sewer treatment and fire safety projects.

Most of the infrastructure projects included in the agreement are either almost done or will be done in early 2026, Walker said.

The agreement also noted that in order to receive the tax increment financing

funding, Panasonic must invest at least \$1 billion and operate the facility that employs 2,500 full-time employees.

Walker said he's spoken with Lt. Gov. David Toland and others from the Kansas Department of Commerce about what De Soto projects mean for the greater Kansas economy. De Soto remains a key part in attracting business to Kansas, he said.

De Soto City Council President Rob Daniels said community response to all the developments is mixed, but most residents acknowledge that change was coming.

## Codes

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The codes adopted by the county do not apply to local cities, which have their own building codes.

And even the codes are in place, the county does not inspect buildings.

"It is a voluntary compliance," Planning and Zoning Director John Jacobson said Wednesday.

He said people who are issued building permits from the county are required to sign affidavits indicating their homes will be built to the minimum standards required by the county.

The county has been using what are known as the 2006 International Residential Code and 2006 International Building Code. But it has been proposed that commissioners adopt the 2012 International Residential Code and 2012 International Building Code as the county's new building codes with some amendments.

Commissioners were discussing the recommended changes Wednesday when Commissioner Mike Stieben said he does not think Kickapoo and Easton townships should be excluded from the building codes.

"My position is the entire county should be underneath the building codes," he said.

Commission Chairman Mike Smith said he has a tough time supporting the enforcement of

something for one part of the county but not all of the county.

Culbertson argued that building codes are not being enforced because the county does not have an inspection program.

"And unless you have an inspection component, why do you have a rule?" he said.

Culbertson argued that building codes add significantly to the cost of a home.

Stieben made the motion to include Kickapoo and Easton townships in the code enforcement requirements.

Jacobson said the newer codes will be brought to commissioners for formal adoption after they have been reviewed during a public hearing.



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