

# Mules carry cancer victim's memory

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STAFF PHOTOS BY MARY IUVONE

Artist Barry Sharplin, owner of Alchemy Creative Clothing, paints a life-sized Fiberglas mule Friday in Frenchtown as part of Miles of Mules. The project chose mules for their contribution to the region's economic development in the 1800s, when they carried coal-filled carts.

## Frenchtown artist brings dreams to life

By GIOVANNA FABIANO  
Staff Writer

**FRENCHTOWN** — Equipped with a pencil and a vivid imagination, Kipp Sujet traveled deep into the forest, stood on top of the moon and swam like a fish to the bottom of the ocean. And he did it all from his hospital bed.

Sujet, who died in 1995 at age 18 after battling leukemia, designed a series of images he called "Pipe Dreams" during a bone marrow transplant procedure nearly 10 years ago.

Now, the Union Township teen's designs are being reincarnated on the back of a life-size Fiberglas mule that will stand on Bridge Street along the Delaware River.

"Kipp's Mule" is one of two mules being painted by local artist Barry Sharplin as part of "Miles of Mules," a public arts project that

stretches the 165-mile length of the Delaware and Lehigh Canal Corridor. More than 150 decorated mules will dot the landscape of five Pennsylvania counties along the corridor as part of the project, which aims to combine art and the region's rich history.

"Kipp's designs were pretty rich in feeling, so aside from just painting, I'm translating the feeling that he put in his work, and we tried to be faithful to what he did. ... It's turned out really beautiful," said Sharplin, who with his wife, Cleo, owns Alchemy Creative Clothing on Bridge Street.

Although "Kipp's Mule" is sponsored by the Kipp Sujet Memorial Scholarship Fund, the Frenchtown Business and Professional Association raised funds for a second mule, titled "River Mule" because of Sharplin's depiction of a river scene.

Miles of Mules is based on an idea first introduced in Zurich, Switzerland, where decorated, life-size cows were placed on display throughout the city and countryside, attracting thousands of visitors. A few years ago, the project arrived in New York City, dotting street corners with herds of multicolored cows.

The mule was chosen because the animals played a crucial role in the region's development in the 19th century, when they pulling mine cars filled with coal to New York and Philadelphia markets, according to the project's official Web site.

For Sharplin, a multimedia artist who has mastered a variety of painting mediums, working on the mules has been "quite an adventure," he said.

"I've been painting both simultaneously, switching modes, style

About 150 decorated mules will cover five Pennsylvania counties in memory of Kipp Sujet, who died in 1995 after a battle with cancer.

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BARRY SHARPLIN,  
painting Fiberglas mules

techniques and color. ... Kipp's mule has been very amazing to do when you know the story behind it, because it's like a memorial to him," Sharplin said. "It's a very moving experience to copy his designs."

The River Mule, Sharplin said, "is just more Barry the painter expressing himself."

The mules will be completed next week and remain on display through October, Sharplin said.

For more information on the project, visit [www.milesofmules.org](http://www.milesofmules.org).

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