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Gregg Sanborn

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Artist Selected For UNH Mascot Sculpture

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DURHAM, N.H. — An artist noted for his realistic bronze and stone sculptures has been selected to create a sculpture of a wildcat, the University of New Hampshire's mascot, the UNH Alumni Association announced recently.

Matthew Gray Palmer of Friday Harbor, Wash., will cast a larger-than-life-sized bronze wildcat sculpture, to be mounted on boulders in a grassy area in front of the Whittemore Center on Main Street in Durham. The Alumni Association hopes to unveil the new sculpture during Homecoming Weekend 2006, Oct. 13–15.

Fifty artists submitted proposals; Palmer was selected from a group of four finalists. A committee of UNH staff, faculty, alumni and parents spent two and a half years developing the guidelines, inviting bidders, reviewing the applicants and making the final selection.

Palmer's winning proposal says the sculpture will "emphasize grace, balance, strength and intelligence," and will represent a "sleek and powerful" wildcat. Some of his previous public works are on display at the Arches National Park; Columbus Zoo; Hanover College in Hanover, Ind.; Toledo Zoo; Butler University in Indianapolis, Ind.; St. Charles Mercy Hospital in Oregon, Ohio; and the Longaberger Company's memorial garden, and are viewable on his web site at <http://www.matthewgraypalmer.com/>

Palmer began his training as a sculptor at Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center in Columbus, Ohio, and then worked full time at the Old World Stone Carving company in Sunbury, Ohio. Several of his carvings from this time were featured on the Home and Garden Network's Modern Masters program. Subsequently he opened his own studio to work on commissions in stone, marble, clay, wood and bronze.

"Matthew came closest to our ideal of what we were looking for," said university archivist Elizabeth Slomba, chair of the selection committee. "The quality of his art, his responsiveness and his professionalism really impressed the committee."

Gregg Sanborn, executive director of the UNH Alumni Association, predicts the sculpture will quickly become one of the "have-to" places to visit on the UNH campus for students, alumni, parents, visitors and UNH sports fans. "The wildcat mascot is part of our heritage and our tradition. You hear the phrase 'Go 'Cats!' all the time," said Sanborn. "The sculpture will be a handsome and striking reminder of that heritage, in a very visible place on campus."

The date and time of the wildcat sculpture's unveiling next fall will be posted on the UNH Alumni Association's web site at <http://www.alumni.unh.edu/Calendar>.