



Portrait of an artist

# Museum inspired a young Joanne Benites

WRITTEN BY Rich Breault | PHOTOGRAPHS BY Evelyn Kristo

**E**ight-year-old Joanne Benites liked to doodle and draw cartoon-like characters. Then she went on a school field trip to the Los Angeles County Museum and from that day on she aspired to be an artist.

"No more doodling for me," said Joanne Benites Maldonado, who moved to Quartz Hill last year from the San Fernando Valley with her husband, Richard.

"I saw the portraits and said, 'wow!' I thought that someday I'd like to do that."

An accomplished artist, Benites Maldonado has drawn and painted animals, landscapes, flowers, beach scenes and Indians, but her love is doing portraits.

"After that field trip everybody became a potential portrait," she said. "As I got older I'd see people in the line at the bank in period clothes.

"For a time I painted family members' portraits. They'd put on costumes, then I painted a portrait. It's sort of like playing a violin—practice, practice, practice."

Benites Maldonado said she was hesitant about moving to the Antelope Valley and away from her art circles.

"I thought there wouldn't be any art up here. Boy, was I wrong," she said. "I joined just about every club and art organization there is.

