

HUNTERS GLEN

# Small Palette, *Big Landscapes*

Artist Lark MacPhail's 14 years in Winnetka gave her the confidence and support she needed to thrive.

BY LAURA M. BROWNING



**E**ven though Lark MacPhail has lived and painted in Maryland for the last four years, she credits her 14 years in the North Shore as one of the keys to her success. Her husband, Andy, served a 12-year tenure as President and CEO of the Chicago Cubs, and they moved to Winnetka when their children were 2 and 5. MacPhail began taking classes at the Evanston Art Center, and eventually, a friend rented studio space in Winnetka above an auto body shop and persuaded MacPhail and a few others to join her. The Treetop Studio was born, and that small community of artists helped MacPhail incorporate painting into her life. "The way I was able to really get back into art when my kids were little was the tremendous support and network I had living on the North Shore," she says. (Although the founding members no longer participate, The Treetop Studio still exists.)

MacPhail's impressionistic style is defined in part by color, or lack thereof: She generally limits herself to about eight to 10 colors in any single painting. She does most of her work *en plein air*, so part of the reasoning behind that self-limitation is simply a matter of logistics—it's too difficult to tote 20 different oils along with an easel, canvas, and brushes, especially when you're painting a scene that contains all the subtle movements of wind and light and nature. But what's most impressive about this is just how colorful and vibrant her landscapes are—"limiting" hardly feels like the right word to describe what MacPhail does with those eight or 10 colors. Red and gold foliage throw gray shadows onto green grass; an early fall day comes alive in bright orange leaves; a brick red barn stands against a golden field. MacPhail says that this palette gives her freedom to explore other aspects of painting, as well as a kind of focus. "I've always thought of myself as a colorist, but I've