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Urban League gets gift of King portrait

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AURORA -- Six months ago, Cassidy Alexander had never heard of the Quad County Urban League. But last week, she gave them a special gift -- an original portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King that now hangs in the lobby of the organization's Farnsworth Avenue headquarters.

Alexander has been painting professionally for more than 30 years, and she said the King painting was originally commissioned for a collector's plate years ago. But she brought the original portrait with her when she and her husband, David, moved to Aurora from California a few months ago. She believes she has

found the perfect place for it.

"I heard about the Urban League and about the great things they do here, and I thought it would be a great home for it," she said.

Alexander calls King one of the people she admires most. So when she got the opportunity to paint a portrait of him, she took the responsibility very seriously.

"There weren't many people willing to stand up for a cause then, but he did," she said. "Even though he knew his life would be in danger."

King is the only political figure Alexander has ever painted, and she said it was her idea. While the portrait includes a serious snapshot of King staring out of the painting, Alexander also included a scene of him talking with several children, a wide grin on his face.

That element, she said, makes it perfect to display at the Urban League because the organization works with children all over the Fox Valley, providing education, job training and counseling.

The couple moved to Aurora for David Alexander's job; he's the new deputy director of the SciTech Hands-On Museum. Cassidy Alexander said she plans to open her portrait business here and continue what she's been doing for three decades. She has already found studio space on Downer Place and started accepting appointments.

"I think it's appropriate to get this painting of Dr. King at this time of year," said Danata Andrews, the league's vice president and chief operating officer. "We celebrate his cause and his vision, and it fits in perfectly with what we do."

To see Alexander's painting of Dr. King, stop by the Urban League at 1685 N. Farnsworth Ave. in Aurora. To see more of her work, log on to www.thealexanderstudio.com.