

Joan of Arc medals to go to battle

joe kimball
around st. paul



Pat Benincasa specializes in religious art, but for two years the good Lord just wasn't providing the inspiration she needed to complete a 6-foot painting of **St. Joan of Arc**.

Then on April 8, a bolt came from above.

"I couldn't get it out of my head that our troops in Iraq don't have the body armor they need. When I walked into my studio that day and saw the unfinished Joan, I knew instantly that she was going to be another kind of body armor — a medal for our troops," said the St. Paul artist, who's also an artist-in-residence at **Hill-Murray School** in Maplewood.

She quickly redrew the image to fit on medals and found

a company to cast them. Donations helped defray the costs.

The first batch of 1,000 will be ready at the end of May. They will be sold individually for \$19.95 or at big discounts in packs of 30, 50 or 100, so schools or churches can buy in bulk and attach messages when sending them overseas. She's been advised by military officials to label the packages "metal pictures" rather than "religious medals" to avoid any perception of proselytism.



Pat Benincasa sees the medal as "another kind of body armor." For information: www.patbenincasa-art.com.