ARTISTS of the ABBOTT DAY SILENT AUCTION

Deb Brockway – Art Quilting

Deb Brockway discovered her passion for the marshlands during her first kayaking experience in the early morning hours, which sparked her interest in exploring Spring Lake and learning about these unique ecosystems. She brings extensive volunteer experience in trail development, having worked both locally and nationally in planning, constructing, and maintaining hiking trails. As a dedicated trail monitor who has led construction projects within the marshlands, she currently serves as Stewardship Committee Chair, where her primary goal is achieving a thoughtful balance between preserving natural habitats and ensuring sustainable public access to these protected areas.

Deb retired from a distinguished career in education, where she focused on both teaching and conducting research in learning and assessment within STEM classrooms. Her educational foundation includes a background in environmental chemistry, earning a certification as a Rutgers Environmental Steward after completing a multifaceted project in the marshlands alongside Pat Coleman.

Beyond her environmental work, Deb is an accomplished art quilt hobbyist who draws creative inspiration from the natural world's inherent beauty and serenity. Her artistic talents have gained recognition through exhibitions in art and quilt shows across several states, where her nature-inspired creations continue to captivate audiences with their unique blend of environmental awareness and artistic expression.

Ann Darlington – Fine Photography

Ann Darlington is a self-taught landscape nature photographer inspired by the beauty of the natural world. Using photography Ann is compelled to capture that inspired moment and convey to the viewers that moment of wonder. Inspired by the words of Irish poet, John O'Donahue, "When we walk on the earth with reverence, beauty will decide to trust us." Her work has been shown at many exhibits locally, including the Friends for the Abbott Marshlands; Pineland Preservation Alliance; Trenton City Museum/Ellarslie Mansion; Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge; D&R Greenway Land Trust; and RWJ Gallery. Additionally, Ann served as the chairperson for the Friends for the Abbott Marshland's 10th Juried Photography Exhibit 2022 as well as the current chairperson for the upcoming 2024Juried Photography Exhibit.

Marsha Dowshen – Pottery

Marsha desired to be a visual artist. It became a focus for her life from the day she could hold a crayon…or grab a handful of mud. She was so directed that she only applied to the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence (noted by many as the finest art college in the world). RISD agreed and provided the base and the tools for what Marsha does

today. She graduated in 1966 with a B.F.A. in Painting. From there she entered the Royal College of Art in London as the only accepted American graduate student. Her paintings were well received and found their way into one- artist and group shows in the UK, and in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the US. The paintings have won a number of awards.

Since Marsha also learned to love clay as a medium while taking courses at RISD, she decided to experiment with her color and design sense - how it could be combined with the craft of wheel throwing to create objects that could be both useful as well as pieces of art in themselves. During that time Marsha developed many unique glazes and application techniques. She likes to think of her creations as "one-of-a-kind, three-dimensional, functional canvases." Her functional and decorative-ware, and mosaics are part of private collections world-wide. Marsha is also a member with the Friends for the Abbott Marshlands.

Mary Leck – Fine Photography

Mary Leck is a self-proclaimed seed enthusiast whose fascination with botany began in childhood when she wondered if an orange seed she had swallowed would grow inside her. As a senior at UMass, while walking across campus and contemplating her research project, she marveled at how anyone could pursue anything other than a Botany major.

Since then, Mary's research has primarily focused on seeds. She discovered tidal freshwater wetlands in 1974, and that initial research project examining seeds in marsh soil with a Rider University student led to an impressive body of work including more than 25 marsh-related publications and two co-edited books covering soil seed banks and seedlings. Seeds and marshes have become central to her identity; Mary finds pure joy in being immersed among wetland plants or attempting to identify new seedlings emerging from marsh mud.

Her marsh-related laboratory projects for students and educational field trips for Trenton high school students helped her recognize the marsh's vital importance as an educational resource. Mary evolved into a passionate advocate for marsh preservation. Through collective efforts, the marsh now features a nature center, an active Friends group, new trail signage, and diverse programming.

Mary also pursues photography as a creative outlet. Her most recent exhibition at the Tulpehaking Nature Center, titled "The Wisdom of Trees" created in collaboration with Patricia Bender, explores the fascinating ways tree bark adapts to accommodate growth in diameter and circumference.

Srishti Rajoria – Sculpture

Srishti Rajoria is a contemporary wire sculptor based in New Delhi, India; who transformed her corporate career into artistic expression. After graduating with an MBA in Pharma from NIPER Mohali, India in 2015, she entered the corporate world but found it unfulfilling, prompting a creative pivot in early 2017.

Using copper wire and her father's tools, Srishti initially crafted wire jewelry and name tags as gifts, showcasing her work at fairs after receiving encouraging feedback. She honed her skills through online platforms like Pinterest, YouTube, and Udemy, learning wire wrapping basics while allowing her imagination to flourish.

In early 2019, she launched Wirecarved on Instagram, quickly gaining followers and repeat customers. This success led her to expand into wire sculptures, her true artistic calling. Her work draws deep inspiration from Indian mythology, biblical stories, and spirituality, with each sculpture narrating stories and reflecting human emotions.

Starting with copper wire, Srishti later explored wire mesh, embracing the challenge of transforming 2D materials into captivating 3D sculptures. In 2024, she began exhibiting at prestigious Delhi venues. Her diverse portfolio includes a story featuring animals and birds from Abbott Marshlands in New Jersey, with works now housed in private collections. Through her volunteership with ORDI (Organization for Rare Diseases India), she creatively repurposes old marathon medals into sculptures.

Srishti continues her artistic journey, using wire sculpture as a medium for self-discovery and global communication through art.

Margaret Simpson – Watercolor Painting

Margaret Simpson grew up in the Lalor Tract neighborhood of Bow Hill Mansion, where she developed an early love for history. Her childhood adventures began in the marsh uplands, meadows, and surrounding woodlands, with Lalor Tract's forests connecting to the historic "White City" area of Spring Lake just one mile away. During high school and college, Margaret worked at Dunham's Department Store in Independence Mall, where she met her future husband, Jamie. The mall sits adjacent to land designated in 1976 as the Abbott Farm Historic District.

Artistic talent runs through Margaret's family lineage. While raising her three children, she pursued graphic design work and exhibited her watercolor paintings at local galleries. Her deep connection to nature drives her exploration, photography, and creative inspiration. Since 2019, she has actively participated in the Abbott Marshlands monthly trail walks. After attending a public session at Tulpehaking Nature Center, her interest was sparked to join the Friends board that same year.

Margaret now dedicates her volunteer time to various marsh conservation efforts, including clean-up activities, photography documentation, graphic design projects, and crafting social media content for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter platforms. She feels grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the Friends for the Abbott Marshlands board, contributing to their marketing initiatives and the ongoing preservation of this unique and ecologically significant location.