

WAYNE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OPENS HABITAT ROOM



Helena Guindon (left) and Kathy Dodge were so happy to see both children and adults of all ages enjoying the mural to 'seek & find' flora and fauna throughout the painting! Photo taken by Kelley Stewart during the open house. Photo provided by Wayne Conservation District.

Wayne Conservation District (Honesdale, PA) celebrated the opening of their new habitat room on Friday, January 13th from 4:00pm until 7:00pm. The professionally hand painted mural includes native plants and animals in their habitats throughout the seasons. The conservation district obtained educational grant funds in order to take on this project as well as purchase educational trunks comprised of a fur kit, skulls and animal tracks in order to aid in environmental education.

This project started in January of 2013 as the district began brainstorming how they could display their large collection of animal mounts. Through a joint effort, the plans for an educational habitat room began and by July the room started its voyage with the first brush strokes.

Wayne Conservation was fortunate to have two professional artists take on the project and volunteer their time. Kathy Dodge and Helena Guindon have spent close to 3,000 hours over the past four years painting and bringing an amazing life to the walls of the room.

Kathy Dodge began drawing at the age of two which later led her to attend Rhode Island School of Design for her Bachelors of Fine Arts and later received her Masters at Marywood University. Her career started in New York City as a freelance artist and led her to join Highlight's Magazine as a staff illustrator. After Kathy decided to start a family she returned to freelancing. The talented artist has dedicated her life to environmental needs serving on the Audubon Society's board for over 40 years as well as being an active member of SEEDS (Sustainable Energy Education & Development Support), and Wayne Citizens To Reclaim Democracy. Kathy explains her decision to take on the project, "I volunteered to do this mural because of my strong belief in environmental education."

Helena Guindon was born and raised in Monteverde, Costa Rica and never gave a thought to ever leaving until two artists arrived from the United States. The artists had been trained at Boston University and instructed art classes for the Costa Rican community. Helena, as one of their students, was inspired to leave Costa Rica in order to pursue art classes at Boston University. Helena, a young girl of nineteen years, talked her father into allowing her cow to be sold to fund her trip. Although the cow that she had raised from a calf was not worth much money; Helena tells the story, "I made enough to get a ticket that got me on and off the plane one way!" Even though Helena didn't graduate with an art degree, she

learned immensely at Boston University and continued to pursue her dreams as an artist. She eventually returned to Costa Rica where she met her husband. Helena has had a successful career as an artist having been able to make a living off of her works. She has traveled back to the US several times, this last time to help care for her husband's elderly parents. Helena has continued to paint and teach art to students of all ages. Journey's End Farm in Newfoundland is her husband's family farm and they have been fortunate to have the use of her talents with running the farm and camp.

While artists traditionally work by themselves, because they find it difficult to mesh different ideas and styles together, Helena and Kathy both remark at how wonderful their ability to collaborate on this project has been, especially when dealing with problem solving. Throughout the paintings evolution they have learned invaluable lessons from one another and have truly enjoyed the process.

For more information on the habitat room please contact the Wayne Conservation District at 570-253-0930 or email kstewart@waynecountypa.gov.