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on the cover

Blaine Verley, one of Astoria Visual Arts' most recent artists-in-residence, has been painting for 40 years but never worked in his own studio until his three-month residency.

Photo by Dwight Caswell

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COAST WEEKEND EDITOR:
REBECCA SEDLAK

COAST WEEKEND PHOTOS:
JOSHUA BESSEX

ADVERTISING MANAGER:
BETTY SMITH

CONTRIBUTORS:
DWIGHT CASWELL

LYNETTE RAE McADAMS

ANDREW TONRY

MATT LOVE

RYAN HUME

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Hear blues, Appalachian folk and more
James 'Sparky' and Rhonda Rucker perform in Manzanita

MANZANITA — The Hoffman Center for the Arts will host a concert featuring old-time blues, Appalachian music, ballads, slave songs, spirituals and original music by James "Sparky" Rucker and Rhonda Rucker. The concert is set for 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 29. Admission will be a sliding scale of \$10 to \$15 at the door.

The Ruckers perform throughout the U.S. and overseas, singing songs and telling stories from the American folk tradition. They weave history, traditional storytelling and humor into their concerts, and they have been featured at the International Storytelling Center and Festival in Tennessee.

The duo make music with finger-style picking and bottleneck blues guitar, blues harmonica, old-time banjo, piano, spoons and bones.

Performing for over 40 years, the Ruckers have appeared at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival as well as on NPR's "On Point," "Prairie Home Companion," "Mountain Stage" and "Morning Edition." Their recording "Treasures & Tears" was nominated for a W.C. Handy Award.

James "Sparky" Rucker has been singing songs and telling stories for over 50 years. Growing up in Knoxville, Tennessee, Sparky began playing

guitar at 11. After graduating from University of Tennessee, Sparky taught school in Chattanooga before becoming a full-time folksinger.

Descended from a long line of preachers and law enforcement officers, his sense of justice stems from both of these traditions. He has been involved with the Civil Rights movement since the 1950s; he participated in workshops at the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee with many prominent people, including Rosa Parks, Myles Horton and Bernice Reagon. He marched shoulder-to-shoulder with SNCC Freedom Singers Matthew and Marshall Jones and sang at rallies,

marches and sit-ins alongside other folksingers such as Guy Carawan and Pete Seeger.

Rhonda Hicks Rucker practiced medicine for five years before becoming a full-time musician, author and storyteller. Rhonda grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and has played piano since the age of 4. She is a versatile singer and performer, using her songwriting for social and environmental advocacy. She has created songs about global warming, the broken health care system, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These songs are showcased on the Ruckers' 2009 album release entitled "One Earth."

Rhonda plays blues har-



Submitted photo

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker will present a concert of old-time blues music at the Hoffman Center on Tuesday, March 29.

monica, piano, clawhammer banjo, and rhythmic bones, and she has appeared on nine recordings with her husband.

Both Sparky and Rhonda are writers. Both contributed to the "Encyclopedia of Appalachia" and "Team Up! Tell In Tandem!"

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