



ART FOR ALL

Painter channels passion at Trail's End

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For The Astorian

Kitty Paino, 70, remembers her first class at Trail's End Art Association vividly. It was an introductory painting course in the 1960s, led by Leona Evans, one of the organization's founding members.

Paino, a seventh-grader at the time, had recently gotten in trouble for cutting down her aunt's prized begonias to make her own watercolors since her family couldn't buy paints.

As a result of the incident, Paino's mother sought an opportunity to cultivate her daughter's creativity. The solution was Trail's End.

"My mother brought me here for a kids' class in painting and that's when I fell in love with this place," Paino said.

The organization was focused on fine arts so the children were taught fundamental techniques and how to paint complete scenes.

Within a few years, Paino was taking art classes at Clatsop Community College before leaving the area to pursue higher education in the arts. She focused on acrylic painting and sketching.

Throughout her 20s, Paino taught art in Coos Bay and worked on commissioned pieces before deciding she wanted a more secure career. She decided to get a second master's degree in education with a focus on curriculum and instruction.

Paino later returned to Clatsop County and became an administrator at the college, eventually retiring as the dean of continuing education in 2005.

At that time, she said, "I just didn't feel well."

Her friend, Terrie Remington, another local artist, encouraged her to connect with Trail's End again. She's stayed involved with the organization ever since.

'An egalitarian place'

Since returning to Trail's End, Paino has taken numerous workshops, sometimes led by nationally- and internationally-known artists. She often learns new techniques and styles, such as oil and encaustic painting and embedding



Photos by Katherine Lacaze

TOP: Artist Kitty Paino is president of Trail's End Art Association. **ABOVE:** Trail's End Art Association members have archived newspaper clippings that share the story of how the organization came into existence 70 years ago.

objects to create three-dimensional pieces.

Paino has painted every day of the last 15 years unless she was on a trip. Even then, she often uses sketching to document her travels rather than taking photos.

"I experiment a lot," Paino said.

One thing that remains constant, however, is her focus on environmental themes. Her pieces bring light to issues like overfishing, loss of habitat and endangered species. She enjoys painting wildlife, like birds and fish.

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Kitty Paino

"But it always comes back to the environment and the story behind them, of what's dying or what's going on," she said. "It's usually life-oriented."

Paino has also served on Trail End's board of directors in multiple capacities, including now as president. She is passionate about the organization and its welcoming, edifying environment.

"It's an egalitarian place where people get their confidence, learn how to paint and draw, try to learn the basic skills," Paino said. "Here, we accept everybody and let them

develop."

Having been an educator for much of her life, Paino especially appreciates that the association focuses on growth and experimentation. The organization's leaders encourage painters to learn from one another and be excited about the aesthetic process.

"It's the place to come for people who are intimidated about just starting, like I was as a kid," she said. "People will start by tracing when they come in and then they'll leave as fine artists."

Restoring a historic building

The coronavirus pandemic has brought unforeseen challenges and temporary changes to Trail's End. Typically, the organization has something going on daily, whether it's a group meeting, workshop or a class.

"In normal times, it's lively here," Paino said.

After being closed for most of spring, the organization reopened for limited hours. The closure resulted in postponements of the organization's 70th anniversary celebration, workshops and gallery shows. Some art groups are resuming but members must make reservations.

Despite the unexpected circumstances, however, the organization was still able to complete its five-year restoration project of the building, which was built in the early 1900s and served as a classroom and gym for students in Gearhart.

The project altogether cost about \$90,000, a significant funding accomplishment for Trail's End, which has an annual budget of roughly \$12,000.

"It was an amazing feat for us to be able to finish the restoration," Paino said.

Katherine Lacaze is Astoria High School's theater director and the founder of Clatsop Children's Theater Company. She is a frequent contributor for Coast Weekend, The Astorian and Seaside Signal.