

Program provides focus, inspiration for artists

BY GINA GOODMAN
Record-Eagle staff writer

Most people who have visited the Leelanau Peninsula and the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore are familiar with the soothing and reflective atmosphere that surrounds the area.

That atmosphere is what prompted the Glen Arbor Art Association, a non-profit organization, to start an artist-in-residence program in 1995. Since then, many local and visiting artists have taken advantage of the village life and the views of Lake Michigan to gain inspiration for their work.

"The benefit for the artist is it gives them the whole Sleeping Bear Dunes Lakeshore Park to draw inspiration from," said Lanny Sterling, chairman of the artist-in-residence committee. "It allows them to pursue their artistic endeavors without the clutter of day-to-day life. They can be on their own and totally focus on their art for a week, two weeks, a month."

The Art Association provides free room and board for residents, as well as art space at the Thoreson Farm, a farmstead in the historic Port Oneida district of the National Lakeshore. The farm is in the process of being renovated to include performance areas, studio areas, gallery areas and facilities to house resident artists, who currently stay in an apartment above the art center.

"Right now we already have the farm fixed up to the point where we're using some of the buildings for teaching classes and stuff,"

Sterling said. "Our artists-in-residence can go out and use the farm. The farmhouse isn't quite restored to the point where they can stay there. But this is an important component, this is the future of our program."

Sterling hopes to have the farm completed in the next few seasons.

Melodie Rupert will start her residency in October. The Traverse City resident teaches oil painting classes at the art center and decided to take advantage of the quiet space to renew some past art techniques.

"I am going to be working on a new landscape collection, which is overdue, and I'm going to be picking up some of my figurative work that I did a long time ago," Rupert said. "I'm hoping to get into doing some of the local people, as I move around town there."

Resident artists are encouraged to interact with people in town and on the lakeshores, Sterling said.

The only requirement for an artist-in-residence is a reception — a presentation to the public of the artist's work and views during his or her stay.

"The benefit to the public is the public has the opportunity to meet an artist, talk to an artist one-on-one, learn about their technique and their style," Sterling said.

There are many types of artists who use different mediums. The program has housed musicians, writers, photographers, painters, sculptors and creative researchers.

Rupert said the Glen Arbor Art Association and the artist-in-residence program gives artists a chance to express themselves in a free environment.

"I just feel it's important that people have an opportunity to celebrate their creativity," she said. "Just to give them encouragement—that's basically what people that want to do art work need."



Record-Eagle/Doug Tesner

Barn space at Thoreson Farm in the Port Oneida Historic District will be used for a possible gallery or studio area for the Glen Arbor Art Association's artists in residence.



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Thoreson Farm is being renovated by the Glen Arbor Art Association to serve as work and living space for artists.

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