

Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative

A not-for-profit organization and land trust

Working across state boundaries to enhance Wolf Lake



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Local Artists Exhibit At Calumet College

Contact: Michael Boos, 219 933-7149 or 312 220-0120

Immediate Release

Nine artists will be exhibiting their work at this year's 17th annual Greening of the Arts Show, which opens Friday, Oct. 14 at the Bernard Gallery at Calumet College of St. Joseph (CCSJ), 2400 New York Avenue, Whiting.

The event is co-sponsored by the college and the Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative (AWLI). The show will continue through November 16.

As in the past, the show features artists who use recycled products or who focus on nature and the environment. It began 17 years ago at the Environmental Education Center in Hammond and has been at Calumet College for the past decade.

Works include paintings, prints, sculptures and photographs. The show is funded partially by the Legacy Foundation of Lake County.

The exhibit will include four drawings of the George Lake landscape by Whiting's Barbara Labus, which past visitors to the Environmental Education Center might recognize. The drawings adorned the center's lobby until the building closed early this year.

"Looking at the drawings now, it is wonderful to realize the treasure this place has become," Labus said. "Especially during summer when all of the pink native hibiscus plants are in full bloom in the wetlands at George Lake.

"While I'm sorry to see the Environmental Center lost, what a joy it is to walk and bike the trails today and see so many people enjoying the beauty of this very special natural landscape and the wildlife it supports."

The drawings were salvaged from the building just before it was demolished this past July and August; It was this building in which AWLI was headquartered for more than a decade.

Exhibiting at the first Greening of the Arts Show at the Environmental Center were artists Roman and Maria Villarreal. They will be participating in this show as well. Maria's granddaughter of Valparaiso, IN will join them.

Other artists are Tyler Bush of Crown Point, IN; Rebecca Moss of Oak Lawn, IL; Tom Mullins of Whiting, IN; Ryan John Smith of Crown Point, IN; and Ron Williams of Bolingbrook, IL.

AWLI is a bi-state, not-for-profit organization and land trust which seeks to protect and enhance the thousands of acres that comprise the Wolf Lake watershed.

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Note to Editors: Below is a list of artists with additional information.

Tyler Bush of Crown Point, IN

Bush is former director of Digital & Studio Arts at Calumet College of St. Joseph, Whiting, IN. There he also was curator of the Bernard Gallery. He will be exhibiting a photograph.

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Rebecca Moss of Oak Lawn, IL

Moss is a retired naturalist with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. She is a former AWLI director.

Tom Mullins of Whiting, IN

Mullins is a nature photographer who has exhibited locally.

Barbara Labus of Whiting, IN

Labus drew four colored pencil drawings on paper of George Lake in 1996. They were created for the Hammond City Planning Commission when plans for the Environmental Center and the trail around the lake were being envisioned. The goal for the drawings was to make the natural areas look inviting. The drawings depict views around George Lake and the wetlands where the trail was planned and include the local species of native plants, grasses and trees, the building that would become the Environmental Center, and possible features such as a viewing platform, trails, and educational signage.

Ryan John Smith of Crown Point, IN

Smith is a sculptor who works with found objects

Maria Villarreal of Chicago, IL

Villarreal has served as a resident artist at Urban Gateways, one of two lead artists at the National Museum of Mexican Art, a muralist/mosaic artist at the Chicago Public Art Group, and lead artist at Gallery 37.

Villarreal also has been affiliated with the Field Museum's Park Voyagers, Chicago Park District and Chicago's Children's Museum. She is best know for her quilt-making, mask-making and papier-mache projects.

Maria Villarreal of Valparaiso, IN

Miss Villarreal, 14, multi-media

Roman Villarreal of Chicago, IL

A former steelworker, Villarreal sculpts multi-figured expressions of the human experience. He places an emphasis on the experiences of the Mexican-American community and people of color. Among his recent works include "Tribute to the Past" in 2015, a bronze statue at Steelworkers Park; "Tribute to the Past and Nature," a stone sculpture with Frank Diaz, 2020 at Big Marsh Bike Park near the new Ford Calumet Environmental Center; and "The Garden of Bush," in South Chicago. He currently has a show, "Roman Villarreal: South Chicago Legacies," through early January at the Intuit Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago. He has exhibited nationally and internationally. One of his stone sculptures is part of the National Museum of Mexican Art collections. Other works are among the collections of Chicago's Field Museum.

Ron Williams of Bolingbrook, IL

Williams is a photographer who doesn't focus on a specific genre. Instead, he starts with an idea, creates the scene, then composes theshot. His work was chosen as a finalist in the January and August 2022 Shoot The Frame photo competition.

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