

T SOUTHERN ULSTER TIMES

Public input sought for ‘Art Along The Trail’



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The Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association (HVRTA) and artist Susan Togut welcome the public and residents of the Town of Lloyd to partake in a series of upcoming community workshops where residents will create works of art to be displayed along the Rail Trail for visitors and residents alike to enjoy. In addition, the old Farmers Bridge will also see some new life with its own installation.

The first project, titled Reciprocity, Regeneration, Reemergence: Forging New Realities Together, previously began in 2022 by Togut. With the first project, Togut will install illuminated panels in the pre-existing triangles on the bridge. The text and images created within the panels would be visually dynamic and can be seen from the trail in both directions. For this project, Togut is also seeking additional funding.

According to Togut, she had previously worked on another installation near the Albany area along another rail trail back in 2020 during the pandemic. “The rail trails are a hot environment right now, they’re very important with the pandemic, and people needing to be outdoors, people needing to stay in good spirits, and to exercise and be healthy, all of those reasons, the rail trails became a very central location for individuals and communities to be active, and to be able to engage with each other,” said Togut.

After reaching out to other rail trail groups with phone calls and emails after her experience in 2020, Togut was able to get in contact with HVRTA President Peter Bellizzi, who brought her to the trail and both discussed what they could do. After much thought, the focus became centered on Farmers Bridge for a new installation. “The bridge has historical meaning for the community,” said Togut. “I

designed the project with images that try to represent those three big words, you know, reciprocity, regeneration and reemergence; and reemergence is really referring to coming out of the pandemic, and creating a very collaborative type of community.”

With the Farmer’s Bridge now under the ownership of HVRTA, Bellizzi and his team are working towards creating a new trail off the main railroad trail that would cross the bridge and back down over. As the bridge is very old, an engineer would need to assess the bridge to ensure public safety. Over the course of his nine year tenure as president, Bellizzi has seen the impacts of COVID during the lockdown but also the additions to the trail from creating new paths and maintaining its natural beauty for the greater community. “The trails allowed people to get out,” he said. “We’re all volunteers. Our organization exists to help the Town of Lloyd maintain and improve the trail.”

The second project Reemergence: Forging New Realities Together involves the community worship aspect and was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Statewide Community Re-grants Program. This is a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and administered by Arts Mid-Hudson.

The project would involve community members with the guidance of Togut, to have the opportunity to create mandalas, work with stained glass or paint rocks that would be placed along the trail. Mandalas are also anticipated to be created out of a variety of materials and would eventually be installed in the trees.

“We really want this project to appeal to every age and every type of person. We just want this to be fun and inspiring, and maybe a brand new experience,” said Togut. “This is all about public art and public art is all about making art accessible in the community. We’d like to see this as a cumulative process of creating art along a rail trail, and that it becomes a way to engage the community even more than just engaging with nature.”

The community workshops will be held at 101 New Paltz Road, rain or shine, under the pavilion on the trail. An introductory session and art workshop will be held on Saturday, August 19, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Workshops will also be conducted on Saturdays, August 26 and September 9, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. If necessary, an extra Saturday may be added.

Residents are asked to register on the hudsonvalleyrailtrails.org event page. For additional questions, residents may call (518) 965-1127. A dedication for both projects is to be announced later in the fall.