

There's something in the AIR

Artist-in-residence program takes shape in Oysterville

Tucked quietly in with the spruce and salal, on a rare hillside in Oysterville, Wash., art has a new address.

"Of course, it's not just about art," says Cyndy Hayward, "recovering attorney," independent bookseller and dawning benefactress. "This is really about artists." Her clear voice is edged with excitement, as it is whenever this respected community figure and owner of Adelaide's Books in Ocean Park, Wash., starts to talk about her latest project on the Long Beach Peninsula: Willapa Bay AIR.

Artist-in-residence programs have played a crucial role in the art world for more than a century, fueling the creative fires of artists by providing a place away from the trappings of routine life – a place that allows for and nourishes the fundamental practice of their creativity. At more than 250 such programs across the United States, creative individuals apply for residencies that offer lodging, meals and workspace for a multitude of disciplines. Some focus exclusively on writers, or painters, or composers, and can last perhaps two weeks, or a month, maybe a year. They rise up through the concrete of urban spaces just as they take root on rural farms, and though no two are identical, their message is the same: We value what you do. Come. Be supported. Produce.

Establishing one of these havens has long been a goal of Hayward, who recalls her first vision for this project more than 25 years ago.

"I was traveling across the country, and looking down this pastoral hillside, I saw the most picturesque little ranch, which was an artist-in-residence facility. The buildings all followed the curve of a winding river and here and there, artists were at work. And I just thought, I could

live there."

Mind you, not as an artist.

"I don't consider myself an artist," Hayward says, reverence and respect mixing together in her tone. "But it's clear to me that the work of the artist is critical to our humanity, and also in great need of support."

So in 1999, on 14 acres at the northern tip of the Long Beach Peninsula, Cyndy Hayward dusted off a dream and began to build. The grounds for Willapa Bay AIR sit at the heart of one of the planet's most productive and diverse

ecosystems, a place that is the singular product of a nexus of waters – an intermingling of the Columbia River, the Pacific Ocean and the nine rivers that spill into Willapa Bay. Twice daily, this unique tide-water exchanges almost half its volume in a changing tide. And within these constantly renewing waters, a variety of wetland habitats play host to one grand gathering of

Cyndy Hayward, proprietor of Willapa Bay AIR, relaxes with a good book in a corner of the artist-in-residence facility.

SUBMITTED PHOTO BY MICHAEL DATOLI

wildlife. It's an age-old cycle of exchange, a timeless dance. And for the world-weary artist, it's the stuff of dreams.

Hayward hopes this same spirit of renewal

the arts

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BY LYNETTE RAE MCADAMS

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and exchange will reside at the heart of Willapa Bay AIR when it opens in 2013. The program will offer fully-subsidized residencies, providing private lodgings, all meals and high-quality studio amenities and workspaces. Up to six artists at a time will spend productive days at work in one of the most tranquil settings imaginable, coming together to share an evening meal.



"The program does not restrict what kind of artist arrives here. I want to host creative thinkers and provide a supportive environment for them to work. If an applicant arrives in the traditional form of a painter or a novelist, wonderful. But an astrophysicist or a group of collaborating bio-engineers would be just as welcome. All I ask," she says playfully, "is that they have dinner together." And this is key.

Because what is central to Hayward's program is the understanding that imagination is the parent to both art and science. In other words: Einstein and da Vinci drank from the same well, and the creativity behind the Special Theory shares in the secret to that famous smile.

"Each of these people is basically working on our perception of how we visualize the world," says Hayward. "Now isn't it a dream, that given the right circumstances, they can come together in a place dedicated solely to their creative work?"

A dream indeed, hosted by a generous woman with a firm belief: If art and science are invited to dine together at a table set for collective creativity, the world will benefit.

Could any artist find a better muse?

Willapa Bay AIR anticipates opening its doors for residencies in March 2013. To learn more about artist-in-residence programs, visit www.artistcommunities.org