Bill and Sue Klco and the Good Hart Artist Residency

How do emerging artists establish themselves in a highly competitive field? This is a question Bill and Sue Klco have a personal connection with as their daughter and son-in-law are both young artists. Bill and Sue answered that question 6 years ago by creating the Good Hart Artist Residency. In those 6 years it has developed into one of the most exciting and innovative programs of its kind.

Each year artists who are chosen by a selection committee from a highly competitive field of approximately 100 applicants are invited to come for two weeks to concentrate on their art in beautiful and peaceful surroundings. The spirit of the residency program which Sue describes as a "think tank for artists" is based on the integration of art, place and community. The program does a wonderful job of featuring each of these. The Klcos have a strong desire to connect with the community and to support local non-profits. They partner with six community organizations: The Women's Resource Center, Crooked Tree Arts Center, Harbor Inc., Tip of the Mitt, Little Traverse Conservancy and Harbor Springs Festival of the Book. Each artist participates in a community event with one of those partners with the choice of event depending upon how the artist's work can amplify the work of that specific organization. The events have included a workshop at Crooked Tree for local art educators and an opportunity for local students to spend a day in nature and then write and share poetry about their experience. There is a further connection with the community in the form of scheduled Saturday Open Studios when the public is invited to meet the artists and learn more about their work. Each artist is also paired with local community members who serve as additional hosts and broaden personal connections.

Two years ago Bill and Sue purchased additional property on Lamkin Drive and began the job of building living quarters and a separate studio for the artists in residence. Doing much of the work themselves, they have created two beautiful buildings that fit perfectly into their surroundings. The buildings are designed with accessibility in mind in order to be welcoming for everyone—artists and the public alike.

Always looking for ways to expand their support of artists, Sue and Bill continue to develop new programs. This season for the first time they offered a residency specifically for a Michigan art educator and they have added extra weeks to include more writers. This year they hosted 6 visual artists and 4 writers. Next season, as a result of their desire to help underserved artists, they are developing a new slot for parents who are unable to leave their children for 2 weeks. With help from a grant provided by the Sustainable Arts Foundation they will be able to provide a childcare stipend for an artist and up to 2 dependents. Sue and Bill told me that the most special part for them is that they have the opportunity to meet such interesting people. They are also touched by how grateful and appreciative the artists are.

They keep up contact with many of them and 5 alumni artists are on the Board. During our conversation, Sue described the Good Hart Artist Residency as "a small, quiet program with connections to nature." And yet it is so much more. This program enriches not only the artists, but our community and we are incredibly fortunate to have something of this caliber in our area.

by, Edy Stoughton