

Community gathering marks the completion of a mural at Saugerties beach

by [David Gordon](#) / August 12, 2020 / Comments closed



Angela Gaffney-Smith describes the creation of her mural, "Tranquility Trail." (Photos by David Gordon)

An opening reception for "Tranquility Trail," a mural on the walls of the building on the Saugerties beach, included music, games and a movement piece. The mural by Angela Gaffney-Smith depicts the birds and scenery of the beach. It was jointly sponsored by Shout Out Saugerties and Smith's Hardware.

"This is the largest mural I have ever designed. and the first one I have done in place," Gaffney-Smith told a group of about 60 people gathered for the opening last Sunday, August 9. Her others have been painted on panels, which were then installed in place, she said. After being asked to create this mural, Gaffney-Smith explained that she stood looking at the building. "This flowing line popped out," she said. "You can see the gold line that goes right through the mural."

In a turbulent world, getting out into the woods can restore a feeling of tranquility, Gaffney-Smith said. “That golden line, I believe, is an energy that connects us all; I feel that whether you call it chi or spirit or if you call it quantum physics, there’s something that connects everybody – animals, people, plants, the ground; so the line represents energy.”



Angela Gaffney-Smith’s husband, Jacob Smith, paints masks with his kids, Lucy, 2 and Carver, 4.

The connections among the elements of the mural are like the connections between the natural forms in the illustration, Gaffney-Smith said. The trees seem like individuals, but “the roots are connected to the ground, and the trees that you think are just there and give off oxygen also have a connection with each other.”

On the side of the building are a variety of birds: ospreys, egrets, wood ducks, and mallards. Those birds have a connection to the Esopus Creek and to the Esopus Bend Preserve. “I describe the style as illuminated manuscript meets art nouveau, but Joanne Pagano Weber described it as ultimate cubism,” she said,

Gaffney-Smith described the collaborative process; “I would dab the color on a section of the mural, and they [volunteer artists] would come and fill it in.” The mural changed from the original sketches as it progressed, she said, something that often happens during the creative process. She started working on the mural around the beginning of June, she said, generally working early in the morning, before the beach became crowded.

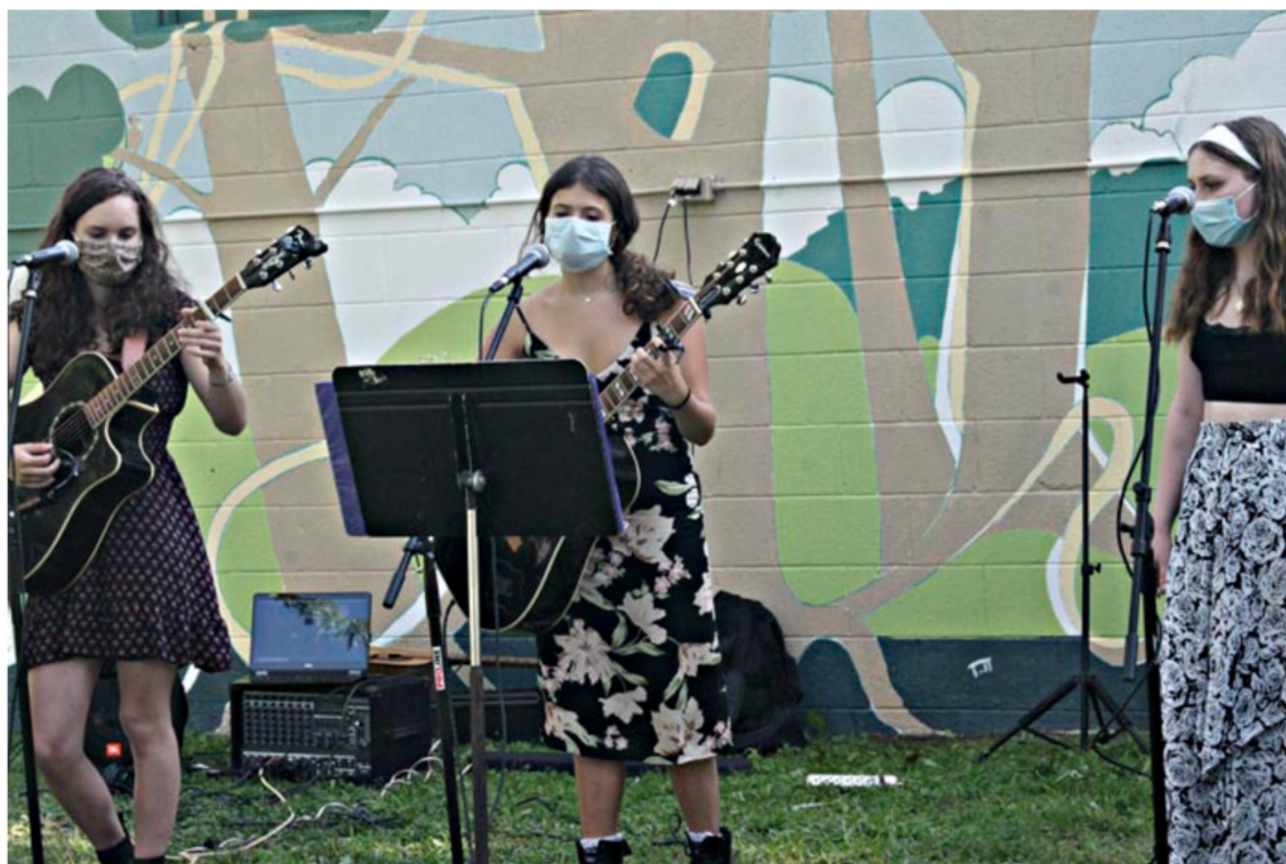
Gaffney-Smith thanked her son Gabriel, who helped her grid the building for transferring the painting. She also thanked Edith Bolt, who also painted the sign for the display, and Joanne Pagano Weber, Todd Norlander and Brittney Bernard, who joined her on the mornings she worked on the mural.



Riley Kate Arnold tosses a bean bag, one of the kids' games set up for the opening.

She thanked the town and village governments, with a special thanks to George Terpening; to the Shout Out committee and its founder Suzanne Bennett; to Smith's Hardware for paint and supplies"; to Steve Chorvas, the "bird man" who leads bird watching hikes in the area and gave advice on what species to include. She recognized her husband, Rick Smith. for painting the soffits; "One neat thing about the soffits and the top border of the building is that when you are up on the hill and you come down, the top border of the building does not take away from the wetland in the background."

Town councilman John Schoonmaker, who serves as liaison from the board to Shout Out Saugerties, said that “in the trying times we are facing, with all the uncertainty something that is obvious to me, and I think to everyone here, is that we need the arts more now than ever. All of us have been locked up. We’re all in this weird space. I notice all my artistic friends and even people who aren’t into the arts have started branching out and become more creative during this process because it’s a great outlet and it’s a way to express how you’re feeling.” Schoonmaker praised Shout Out for keeping its programs going despite the pandemic, with theater, readings and other activities. “One of the things that make Saugerties unique is that we have such a thriving artistic community.”



Waking Sage performs at the mural opening.

Music at Sunday’s event was provided by Waking Sage, a trio consisting of Kaia Dedek, Laila Smith and Olivia Siegel.

Gaffney-Smith’s collages and paintings are on her website, <https://angelagaffneysmith.com/>.