

Special Recognition for Advancement of the Arts Award: Paul Hartelius

By Pat Johnson

Paul Hartelius is many things to many people—a husband and father, artist, volunteer and friend. His Special Award for the Advancement of the Arts in Ocean County seems long overdue, as Hartelius has been an active force in both the Pine Shores Art Association and The Tuckerton Seaport. In a recent interview, Hartelius said he doesn't do things for recognition, "However it is nice to be recognized!"

The artist is an engineer who moved from Union County to Beach Haven West in 2009 and retired in 2011. That's when he joined Pine Shores Art Association where he organizes and hangs art shows, writes grants, is a past president, facilitates a portrait session on Sunday afternoons, sweeps floors and is a general all-around volunteer.

His mother and father were artists: his mom, Marge Hartelius wrote and illustrated children's books and his father, Paul Jr. was an art director in New York City. "I had an unlimited opportunity to learn art and all the art supplies you could dream of. I was encouraged by both parents, my mom—I couldn't do anything wrong but my dad always had some constructive criticism. Mom would say, 'Oh, I love that,' and he'd say, 'You should have done that differently,' It's funny but that's what sticks with me."

As a child, Hartelius also learned about deadlines and developed an aversion to them. His own business card states: "Procrastinart Just-In-Time Watercolors."

"They had a home studio and I was introduced to the life of a commercial artist—my Dad would come home from his office in New York City and we usually didn't finish dinner until 9 p.m. Then they would work into the night—my mom doing illustrations and my dad doing the mechanicals until 1 or 2 in the morning. I always thought there has to be a better way."

So he waited until he retired from engineering to do art on his own time. But he has a deep appreciation for his upbringing.

"If my parents were not doing art, we were taking trips with art supplies. My parents always carved out time while we were on vacation to do Plein air painting and



Paul Hartelius at Pine Shores Art Association.
Photo credit: Pat Johnson.

my sister and I tagged along. I think that's why I love Plein air painting today." (Plein air is creating artworks while outside in nature.) His family also had a vacation home in Beach Haven West and when his parents retired and moved to Ocean County permanently they became founding members of Pine Shores Art Association. "They were life drawing enthusiasts along with Alex Stilano (now deceased) and Brad Thomas."

Hartelius is always painting, watercolor is his favorite medium and he makes an effort to put a piece in each and every group show that Pine Shores hosts. "That means I do ten to 12 paintings each year and that forces me to practice."

Paul Hartelius continued....

Although he paints in the realistic style he's not a stickler for technique—"I like to paint and not to think—art becomes a chore if it's forced."

In 2014, Paul joined the Tuckerton Seaport and fast became an indispensable volunteer there. He worked with former boat-builder Ron Spodofora and Wayne Martin. "Between Wayne, Ron and I; we did everything that needed doing—paint a building, cut grass, build cabinets—I enjoyed it."

He also created an art gallery in the visitor center where Pine Shores artists could exhibit their paintings. "My wife (also a volunteer and then the business manager) would say—just tell these people 'no' whenever a new project came up, but the word no is not in my vocabulary, it drives her crazy."

For one example, when the Captain's House was re-imagined as a teashop –'Lady Magpie's Steam Punk Tea Shop,' Hartelius turned the entry hall stairs into 14 fake bookshelves to reflect book titles of the 1800s. "I researched them on the Internet and hand-painted the titles on the books spines. I really enjoyed that."

"I just like to facilitate activities for other people to make it easier for them. I hang shows and set up

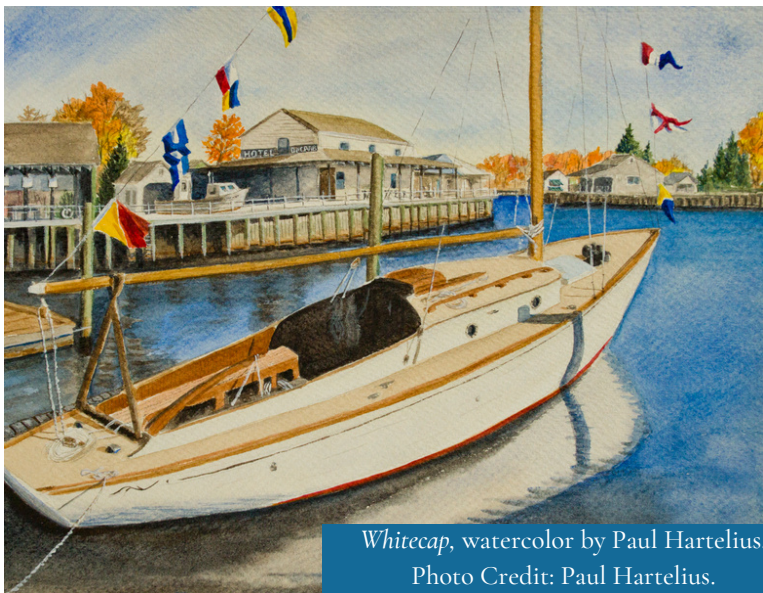


Rockport Fall Glory, watercolor by Paul Hartelius.
Photo credit: Paul Hartelius.

receptions. Before COVID, I was at the Seaport a lot. They had quite a lot of festivals; six to eight a year and I volunteered for all the events—Christkindlmarkt, Haunted Seaport the Seafood Festival. I did props using my artistic talents, helped set up and take down booths and did clean-up afterwards."

Every September Hartelius would also volunteer at the Seaport during the Ocean County Decoy and Gunning Show. Paul also joined folk artists and Seaport staff on a yearly school trip to the local elementary schools. "We did programs that were environmentally oriented with a tie to folk art and local history. I enjoyed that and hope we can do it again soon."

"I enjoy helping people and to make sure that we bring art into our communities. It fits with what I do."



Whitecap, watercolor by Paul Hartelius.
Photo Credit: Paul Hartelius.