



Women artists join forces, market creativity

By **Susan Milton**

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ORLEANS — When Sally Bilbo eyes a piece of fabric or paper, anything can happen.

The Truro artist may create a lamp shade or a pillow, a photograph or a greeting card.

"I'm a printmaker, but I also like to investigate and create all kinds of things," she said.

Bilbo and several other women artists on the Cape are exploring and marketing their creativity through the SheArt Network, a grassroots group of artists based in Orleans.

"We believe creativity builds women's self-esteem and provides a springboard for women to get together, socialize, learn new techniques and work on projects either together or individually," said founder Michelle Preston of Orleans.

She started SheArt two years ago with a group of 10 friends who seemed to share a creative spark. The group has grown to 20 artists, ranging in age from 20-somethings to a 93-year-old grandmother, and spreading geographically from Provincetown to the Upper Cape, said Bilbo, also a founder.

"It's so great to have all these different generations of women come together and help each other," said Bilbo, who bakes for Provincetown store when she isn't creating. "There's just something magical about it. We do this stuff anyway, so we might as well sell it."

It's not unusual for artists to join forces to help each other. Fifteen artists and craftsmen this month opened Coastal Craft Gallery in Main Street Square, next to Oceana in Orleans. More than 65 artists have learned how to market their work and mentor each other through workshops and seminars at the Community Development Partnership in Eastham.

But women in the SheArt network are joining forces to discover what they want to be. They may want to experiment with several art forms, shunning the structure of a traditional gallery or juried shows. At SheArt, all are welcome to join and display their artwork for a \$10 membership fee and 10 percent of their sales at shows. The fee pays for advertising and other expenses.

The network's next goal is to attract more members and find a permanent gallery.

"The majority of Shes are not established artists," said Amy Kinney of Eastham. She is a former high school math teacher who paints and draws — and in her day job is associate director of the Brewster Day Camp.

The members are women who "have been knitting, sewing or painting their whole lives but never thought it was good enough to do anything with it," Kinney said.

"(SheArt) provides a really safe venue to come out and show your work. Now it's not just your parents, partner and grandma that say, 'Oh, that's really nice.' It's a lot of people saying it's really wonderful."

If you go

- SheArt's May Day
Artisan Boutique
- 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. today and tomorrow

- 44 Tonset Road near Main Street, Orleans

www.thesheartnetwork.org

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