



YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

Hello WSNC Members,

Artists Help Fellow Artists

By: Linda Pelc, President of the Southern Watercolor Society

A disaster of great magnitude hit the Florida Panhandle when hurricane Michael came ashore. A wide area from St. George Island to Panama City to Panama City Beach to Mexico Beach and far inland through Bristol and Marianna, FL had trees were ripped in half, people's homes and businesses were ruined. In Mexico Beach the buildings were completely blown away.

Don Taylor, our Past President SWS and Board member, lost all 16 trees that were on his property in Panama City. Two trees fell on his kitchen and three on his bedroom. Bill McKeown's house in Mexico Beach was completely blown away. Only the cement pad and a toilet remained. He was not sure the toilet was his. Michele Tabor Kimbrough lost the front to her gallery and studio in Marianna, FL. Helen Balance had the front porch ripped off her house by the wind. The porch landed in her back yard. So many trees came down over her driveway that she

was trapped there for five days before a crew of seven young men with chain saws cut their way through to free her family.

National media no longer covers this disaster, but the effects of the hurricane linger on as the people struggle to establish some kind of normal to their lives. Artists from the area need help. There is a way for us to help.

The 150mph winds of hurricane Michael cut a massive path of destruction from the Gulf coast deep into the interior communities of the Florida Panhandle. The power of this wind snapped most of the trees in half and rained them down on homes and businesses and power lines. The canopy is gone leaving a torn, broken and naked land. It has taken weeks of frantic effort to restore the basic needs of electricity, water and sewage disposal to most of the people. Heroes have emerged as neighbors help neighbors. It will take more hard and exhausting work to finish the job then clean up all the huge piles of debris.

For artists living in the path of hurricane Michael's destruction, loss goes beyond house and community. Gone are their studios. Gone are their supplies. Worse yet, gone is their portfolio of artwork. As these many artists strive to reestablish a new life, we can surely help jumpstart their creative process.

The Palms Conference Center in Panama City Beach, FL houses the Sunshine Arts Center and luckily survived this disaster with minimal damage to the roof. Helen Balance, Director of the Sunshine Arts Center, has initiated a campaign to "Get Artists Back to Work!" This Center is becoming a hub to pull artists together from the region of Panama City west through Panama City Beach, Mexico Beach and Port St. Joe and north through Bristol and Marianna, FL. Helen is opening The Palms Conference Center space for artists to use as studio workspace. However tools and supplies are needed to get their creative process flowing again. This is where we can help.

Search your studios for supplies that you no longer use. All media tools and supplies are needed; watercolor, acrylic and oil paint, brushes, paper and canvas as well as pencils, pens, markers and pastels. Take this call for help to your local

art groups. Gather these needed materials and send them South.

1. Donated supplies may also be boxed and mailed to:

Balance, Director

Bay County-Palms Conference Center

9201 Front Beach Rd.

Panama City Beach, FL 32407

2. Anyone wishing to donate money for artist gift cards may make the donation checks out to the Sunshine Art Center.

Providing art supplies is the first stage of getting these fellow artists back to work. Helen, with the help of the Beach Art Group will make the supplies available for any artist to take and use to jumpstart the making of creative artwork. Stage two of Helen's plan is to hold workshops and events that bring these artists together at the Sunshine Art Center. Instructors can also donate their time to a workshop so that participating artists need not pay a fee. The donation of supplies and time will help plant the joy of creating back into the lives of artists who lost so much.

For inquiries, please contact:

Helen Balance, 850-541-3867 or beachartgroup@att.net

