

Thinking Creatively About Peace, Justice and Sustainability

Bobbette Rose

Madison, WI

HONORABLE MENTION

I met Gene Farley in 2012 through a mutual friend, Vern Visick. Gene was a creative thinker as well as art-maker and he felt artists needed to be part of the Farley Center mix of farmers, scientists, health professionals, educators and social activists. Framing environmental issues as well as peace and justice within a context of art, music and storytelling, he felt, would help people enter into the discussion in welcoming ways that value each person's creativity and point of view.

I didn't really know much about the Linda and Gene Farley Center for Peace, Justice and Sustainability but Vern knew I had similar ideas about how the arts can help engage the community around difficult issues. So, he brought Gene and me together. We immediately connected as I visited him in his unique "round" house filled to the rim with creative beauty as it overlooked beautiful woods on one side and lush, green fields on the other.

We talked long into the evening on art, our love for the land, a vision of justice and peace and how creativity intersects. We acknowledged that conversations around how to steward our natural resources were often riddled with mixed messages, debate and confusion about what the science really means and often fall apart around political lines. We began brainstorming how to bring artists into the mix in a hope to open up new ways of seeing, experiencing and interpreting the world around us.

This led to a number of conversations over that year. He included Susan Corrado, the Farley Center Project Coordinator and I invited a couple artist friends who had similar environmental interests as me (including Karen Reppen, an artist who is now on the Farley Center Board of Directors).

This birthed our first land-art installation project in 2013. I invited artists who I knew were also interested in environmental and justice issues to join me in creating a piece of art in the Natural Path Sanctuary woods. Eight artists participated that first year. We have now created art in the woods every other year since, with 26 artists participating in 2021. The Overture Center for the Arts in Madison invited us to display a photo documentation of our work in their Playhouse Gallery in 2017.

We also led a variety of community conversations including a gathering/poetry reading event. Madison Poet Laureate, Fabu shared her poetry and we invited others to bring their own to share as we discussed climate change issues.

In 2014 we invited the Beehive Collective, a national artist group that toured with printed murals to engage communities around various social and environmental issues. They led us through an interactive day-long workshop titled *"ROCK BOTTOM" in the Age of Extreme Resource Extraction* using allegorical images and informative stories from around the Great Lakes bio-region.

In 2015 we partnered with the Center for Resilient Cities on a Yahara 2070 day-long interactive workshop, creating mind-maps and posters envisioning and discussing the future of our local environment in the next 50 years through four possible story scenarios.

Gene and Linda Farley have now passed, but we continue to honor their vision by bringing creativity to the Farley Center/Natural Path Sanctuary community.