

## Stepping Up



### The Academy gets a makeover

The Spencertown Academy has aged as gracefully as might be expected of any 167-year-old—but the truth is, the building needs work.

Earlier this year, the Academy took a major step in that direction with the reconstruction of the building's front steps and porch. The aesthetic appeal is striking, but more important, the project resulted in critically needed structural improvements.

Meanwhile, an "existing conditions" study of the building prepared by a local architect last year has been completed and will guide future repairs. Testing and inspections were conducted this spring, and the Academy is exploring grant opportunities. The most urgent area of concern is the roof, which is deteriorating and leaking.

Meanwhile, professionals in contracting and architecture are urged to join the Committee. If you can help, please contact the Committee at [518 392 3693](tel:5183923693)/[info@spencertownacademy.org](mailto:info@spencertownacademy.org)

### what's coming up

#### community event

#### Good Globe Singing School Community Sing

Join Sheri Bauer Mayorga and students in a program of fall and winter songs

December 14, 1:30-3:00pm

Admission free

Freewill Donation to benefit the Chatham Food Pantry

#### Revels

#### Annual Winter Revels Party and Dinners

Support the Academy while enjoying a festive evening of great food and friends

January 31, 2015

Cocktail party—5:30pm

Dinners—8:00pm

SEE PAGE 3 FOR MORE INFO

[spencertownacademy.org/events](http://spencertownacademy.org/events)

### on the stage 2015

## 'Washington Square' Comes to Spencertown



The Actors' Ensemble returns to the Spencertown Academy this February with a dramatic adaptation Henry James' 1880 novel, **Washington Square**.

The piece, which has been developed by the Actors' Ensemble over the past three years, stars Bethany Caputo, Chris Smith, Fern Sloan and Ted Pugh. Collectively, the cast has appeared on major Broadway and Off-Broadway, in theatrical productions in Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and Washington, and on TV and in feature films.

Since its founding in 1985, the Ensemble has created and performed theatre productions across the US, and in Europe,

Russia, Croatia, and Ireland and developed a two-year college level acting program through Sunbridge College. The group first performed in Columbia County in 1993 and has made its home at the Spencertown Academy for many years. The group will be opening a new acting school—the Michael Chekhov School—in Hudson, NY, in March 2015.

**Washington Square** will be performed at the Academy on February 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15. For ticket information, please contact the Actors' Ensemble at [info@actorsensemble.org](mailto:info@actorsensemble.org).



from the president's iPad

## We're winding down the year on a high note

### Thanks for your participation and support!



As 2014 draws to a close, I'm happy to report that our second year as an all-volunteer organization has been a successful one.

All of our signature fundraising events—Revels, the Garden Tour and the Festival of Books—have matched or exceeded past years' revenue performance.

Rental activity is also up, with a growing roster of community-based artists and organizations like Sheri Mayorga's Good Globe Singing School, The Actors' Ensemble, Uel Wade's BKO and Scholarship concerts all using the Academy as a rehearsal and performance venue.

Maintaining and preserving the building continues to be a major priority. In 2014 we improved the landscaping around the walkway on the building's south side, repainted the first-floor rooms, cleaned out and organized the basement and, most importantly, rebuilt the front porch, funding much of this work through our signature events.

Of course, there is still much on our to-do list, beginning with a much-needed upgrading of the electrical system and repairs to the roof, which will eventually need replacing. So we hope you'll include us in your end-of-year giving as we undertake our annual appeal.

I would also like to announce that after an extended eight-year term as president I will be stepping down this spring, although I will continue to chair the Building Committee and serve on an advisory committee to the board. Other long-time board members have also indicated their plans to step down. That means that, more than ever, it is essential to identify the new leadership and active volunteers who will maintain this beloved community resource in the years to come.

In that connection, I'm happy to welcome three new board members: Ann Vartanian, Judith Choate and Bruce Felton. These dedicated people, together with our continuing board members, have already begun planning our events for next year.

But we still need your help—on the board, as a committee chair or a member of an Advisory Committee, where your specialized expertise can help enrich our programs and services. There are many different ways to volunteer. If you'd like to know more, or feel you can make a commitment, please contact Ann Vartanian at [volunteer@spencertownacademy.org](mailto:volunteer@spencertownacademy.org).

Meanwhile, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your support and participation in the life of the Academy over the past year.

*Nick Van Alstine*

programming 2014

## Lyme Ticks and Landscapes

### A popular series turns its attention to nature



The Academy's acclaimed "Conversations with Neighbors" series continued in 2014 with probing looks at both the perils and pleasures of nature.

On May 10, Dr. Richard Ostfeld, Senior Scientist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, and Congressman Chris Gibson, sponsor of the Gibson Lyme Bill, shared their perspectives on ticks, tick-borne diseases and newly-emerging pathogens in the Hudson Valley. The program was moderated by former news anchor Michael Singer.



At a sold-out CwN workshop in July, Spencertown resident Linda Horn, a landscape restoration specialist and creator of healthy and beautiful native ecosystems, guided attendees through a tour of a one-acre tall Eastern meadow she created at her home. Modeled on a five-acre grass prairie she had installed in Michigan, the meadow has developed into a fully established, sustainable ecosystem and haven for beneficial insects, birds and wildlife.

At a follow-up workshop in November, Linda was joined by land steward consultant Barbara Hughey, who spoke about medicinal plants and fungi useful to humans and wildlife. A tour and explanation of work undertaken in meadow, woodland, wetland and domestic areas followed.

the academy

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nick Van Alstine, President

Madaline Sparks, Vice President

Jo-Anne Bilotti, Treasurer

Judith Choate, Secretary

Jerry Croghan

Barbara Deisroth

Bruce Felton

David Highfill

Lydia Kukoff

Ann Vartanian

#### MEMBERSHIP

*Are you a current member of the Spencertown Academy?*

Visit our website to sign up or to renew your membership today!

*We thank you for your support*

#### PLEASE VISIT

[spencertownacademy.org](http://spencertownacademy.org) for information on programs, artsVOYAGE, membership, and volunteer opportunities or to subscribe to our e-blast list.

*time to chill*

## Come in from the Cold!

Revels again promises a memorable evening of great food and good cheer



# Revels

There is no better way to shake off the chill of winter than to join your neighbors and friends at Revels. Ranking high on the list of Columbia County's wintertime events, Revels offers a great way to escape winter's icy grip—and have a great time in the process.

This winter's Revels takes place on Saturday, January 31—beginning, as always, with a cocktail reception at the Academy. Guests will be treated to sumptuous hors d'oeuvres and a selection of fine wines and delicious cocktails. From there, you'll head out to one of the many elegant and intimate dinner parties hosted by friends of the Academy.

"Revels has been a fixture of our winter calendar for over a quarter century—and it keeps getting better and better," says Academy board member and Revels co-chair Judith Choate. "For newcomers to Columbia County, it provides a wonderful way to meet new friends over a great meal and support the Academy," adds co-chair Anita Fiorillo.

Tickets will be available soon. Check [spencertownacademy.org](http://spencertownacademy.org) in mid-December for the announcement.

*the write stuff*

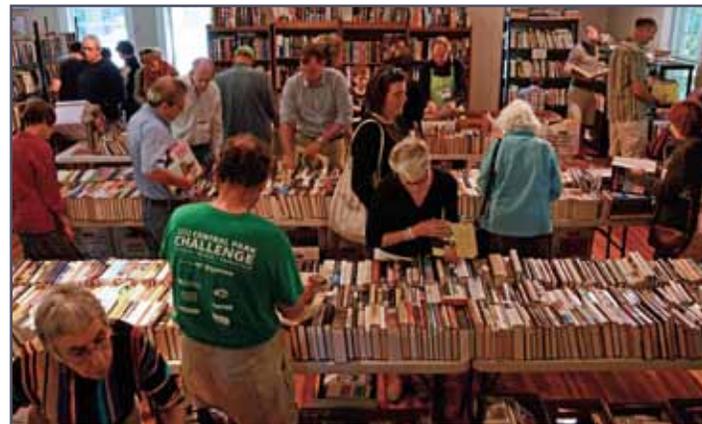
## A Best-Selling Festival of Books

Volunteers and donors put this year's event over the top

For old-school bibliophiles and Kindlers alike, the Spencertown Academy's annual Festival of Books offers a chance to do some serious browsing and buying, meet celebrated authors and immerse themselves in all things literary. This year's Festival—as always, held on Labor Day weekend—may have been the best ever. Much of the credit goes to the Festival's team

of tireless volunteers, led by Allan Davidson and Cindy Atkins, "They were truly inspiring," says Volunteer Coordinator Ann Vartanian.

FESTIVAL OF BOOKS



Starting early in the year, volunteers put in long hours, sorting, moving and pricing books, recruiting speakers, and, as the Festival weekend approached, getting food and drinks ready for the various events. Volunteers and Board members prepared and donated food served at the always popular Cookbook Café. During the event itself, more than 50 volunteers were on hand from Friday evening through Monday afternoon.

"Special thanks go to Super Volunteers Susan Grybas, who organized the children's program, Wayne Greene and Polly Dufresne for making the Special Book Room come together, and Zack Pearson, who did such a great job at our Curious George session," says Ann.

### The power of poetry

In the program tent a capacity crowd turned out for a reading by New York State Poet Laureate Marie Howe. "She looked directly into faces in every row as she read," notes board member David Highfill. "She challenged, she smiled, she made us laugh, and moved us in ways that great writing can."

Another session featured husband-and-wife authors Jonathan Weiner (Beak of the Finch) and Deborah Heiligman (Charles and Emma), who talked about their passion for the Charles Darwin story, and both the scientific and domestic elements of this fascinating history. Darwin's work and the events behind it date back more than a century, but Deborah and Jonathan made them come alive.

The Festival was also a success financially. Of the 10,000 items on hand, over 6,000 were sold, and gross income was more than \$27,000. That represents a significant increase over 2013, thanks in large measure to increased sponsorships from the Spencertown Academy board and members. As in the past, unsold items were donated to Big-Hearted Books in Foxboro, MA, for distribution to boys and girls clubs, senior centers, libraries, prisons and other organizations.

Meanwhile, Festival of Books 2015 is set to start on Friday, September 4. Stay tuned for updates in the new year—and if you'd like to lend a hand, please let us know.



## kid's gallery show



Above: ArtsVOYAGE director Tom Lee with young artists Colin Shea and Aidan MacDonald.

### Imagining the World

"Imagining the World" featured work by third-grade students in the Academy's ArtsVOYAGE program from Mary E. Dardis Elementary (Chatham) and Ichabod Crane Elementary (Kinderhook). The Spring gallery show included art related to four study units—Plants and Seeds, Zen and the Art of Poetry: Chinese Art and Music from the Tang Dynasty, Venice and Aboriginal Dreamtime Art and Mythology.

arts VOYAGE

## hidden gardens 2014

### It Was a Perfect Start to Summer Hidden Gardens Tour Dazzles Again

The timing couldn't have been better: The 10th annual Hidden Gardens Tour took place on Saturday, June 21—the first day of summer.

The self-guided tour wound through the gardens and grounds of six private homes in Spencertown, Chatham, East Chatham, Hillsdale and Ancram. The styles ranged from intimate to grand and included a hilltop spread with views of the Catskills, a sculptor's garden, a romantic country retreat, and a garden with its own one-acre wildflower meadow.

#### Perennial favorite

The Garden Tour Committee once again hosted the ever-popular Twilight in the Garden Cocktail Party. On this perfect summer evening, sumptuous food and beverages were served among the candlelit gardens. Friends and neighbors had a chance to relax and schmooze on the grounds of the historic Queen Anne-style Bezalel Gables in Chatham.

The Saturday program began with a featured presentation at the Academy by

renowned garden expert C.L. Fornari. A former Spencertown resident, C.L. now lives on Cape Cod and hosts GardenLine, a live call-in show. C.L. speaks to audiences across the country and has authored six books and numerous articles about all aspects of gardening.

#### Market stock

More than 20 vendors offered a varied selection of garden-related items at the third annual Garden Market on the Green, held on the Spencertown Green. In addition, Master Gardeners from Cornell University Cooperative Extension were on hand to

offer garden tips. A portion of all sales benefited the Spencertown Academy.

Gardeners and non-gardeners alike found something to enjoy at the Hidden Gardens extravaganza. The fundraiser exceeded last year's event in both attendance and proceeds. Next year's garden tour will take place on June 20.

The Hidden Gardens events were generously supported by Ed Herrington, Inc.

## Hidden Gardens



"BEACH" - Marcia Powdermaker  
1st Place winner



"RED BARN IN SNOW" - B. Docktor  
2nd Place winner



## THE GALLERY 2014

### Brushes with Fame

#### Local artists shine in Academy gallery shows

The Academy galleries were a busy place this year, with three major shows offering works in a wide range of media by some of the area's most exciting artists:

**Off the Beaten Path** kicked off the Hidden Gardens Tour and featured horticultural-inspired works by husband-and-wife artists J. Ann Eldridge (prints) and Bill Duffy (photographs).

**Dreams and Digressions** showcased figurative paintings, landscapes and abstracts, all with a slightly offbeat fee—by Berkshire County artist Kris Galli.

**Regional Art Show** exhibited the works of 27 artists in various media and styles, drawn from more than 200 submissions. The month-long show was juried by Peter Jung, owner of Peter Jung Fine Art Gallery in Hudson; and Marie Claude Giroux and Bill Thompson, co-owners of Thompson Giroux Gallery in Chatham. Marcia Powdermaker and B. Docktor were the first and second-place winners.