Good afternoon and thanks for joining us, I'm Judy Simpson. In just a moment we're going to travel to the Lake Champlain islands to learn about an all-volunteer organization that's been serving Grand Isle County since 1984. It's called Island Arts. Before we head to the islands, I want to introduce Susan Davis. Susan is one of the Island Arts many volunteers and she serves as the organization’s secretary. Welcome and thanks for being with us.

Susan.: Thank you, it's wonderful to be here.

Judy.: Tell us a little bit about Island Arts and what you do?

Susan.: Island Arts is an organization that as you said has been around for quite a long time. It is all volunteer and we are mission says it all we're there to enhance the arts we are there two bring performance is to bring education to help the environment to the people in the rural community of the Champlain Islands.

Judy.: As far as your involvement you've recently become involved but a big job anyway?

Susan.: Yes, yes, as secretary you're part of a fairly large court of directors again all volunteers and we come from all different walks of life and we do a variety of things. We fund raise we go into schools. We organize a variety of programs and stuff like that. Education is a real key element to Island Arts. Education of adults and education of children. Particularly of children.

Judy.: With that introduction let's head to the Champlain Islands where we join Across the Fence’s contributing editor, Lyn Jarvis.

We will start at the Merchant's Bank, in South Hero, where Island Arts has had a gallery since 1997. Chris Allard, Community Banking Manager, told us that it is a rotating gallery with a new exhibit every month featuring local artists from the five communities in Grand Isle County.

Chris Allard / Merchant’s Bank: this month we're very fortunate to have a display on Bhutan it's a display that was put together by the island Arts Group and they did work with children and local schools where they exchanged artwork between children in grand isle county and children in Bhutan. We've had many schoolchildren come in I guess there was a pen pal exchange where they exchanged letters. We also have examples of different textiles that were woven in Bhutan. There's information about the country about their stamps so there's a lot of information in this display and it's been very exciting to have the children come in. We've had kids from Isle LaMotte kids from south hero kids from Alburgh grand isle. It's been wonderful. We've also had a lot of customers that come in the bank they've gone in and people have gone and taken their children back to see it. We had a woman this morning that came in with her young daughter she said I wanted to show my daughter this exhibit because I haven't seen anything like it.
Katya Wilcox, President of Island Arts, has been to Bhutan many times to foster and nourish the Bhutan/Grand Isle County connection that began more than 10 years ago. This connection has flourished and evolved into a cultural and artistic exchange between two worlds that couldn't be more different.

Katya Wilcox / Pres., Island Arts: The Bhutanese are very spontaneous. When I visited the school the teachers usually leave and I say what question do you have. They said how old are you. This not usually a question we would ask here when I would tell them and they would say I'm over 60 so they would say huh that old they thought they were seen a ghost because over there they don't live that long. The life expectancy used to be 40 years but is now higher. But they give birth without help it's a tough life in a rural community.

Caroline Prefontaine / Alburgh, VT: we were doing a project in Alburgh for the Bhutan class in Bhutan And we made art and had the whole class make a picture that involved everybody and the pictures had to make a background that would be part of our everyday life style. And we would swap that with Bhutan's that they made their. We sent that there and they give us their pictures that they drew there and we think it's important to know about other countries and their different cultures so we have more knowledge about. What other people's lives are about.

Erin Chevalier / Alburgh Springs, VT: we learned a lot of differences about our cultures from Bhutan and where we live in Vermont. One example is that their state sport is archery and we don't do archery around here we just to side camps and stuff like that. Another difference is their state dress is the kid’s uniforms and we don't have a lot of uniforms at schools here. The students at Alburgh had fun learning about Bhutan over the years.

Honoring Native Ways, coming up on August 18th at Shore Acres in North Hero, is an annual Island Arts event...coordinated by member Jacque Berchten to celebrate our Native American community; their history, art, and culture.

And even a lesson on Abenaki language from George Larrabee, from Woodbury.

George Larrabee / Woodbury, VT.: [speaks Abenaki] this is not a tepee this is a wigwam. The word is from the Abenaki actually pronounced [Abenaki] to it means peace is of. Pieces of bark over poles. Pieces of bark shelter that's what it means.

(Music)

While Kim Elmore plays "Loons at Ripple Falls" on the Native American Flute, here are some sights and sounds from Honoring Native Ways.

And there's much more, but what many come to see is the Circle of Courage. I asked Dan Stevens to tell us about it.

Don Stevens / Shelburne, VT: I believe the circle of courage and I have to send kudos to Brenda Ganyea who runs the circle of courage program is that 5-10 years ago you wouldn't see children out participating in native events like this because their parents didn't really talk about it that much or their grandparents about how native they are. They stayed within their own family's okay the traditions. But now the children are very proud of who they are and it's great to see the number of kids out here participating in drumming and singing because they are our future.

Island Arts Academy, led by board member Tony Pietricola, offers courses throughout the year for youth and adults. Today we will looking in on a course taught by Kurt Vallenta…entitled Nature Awareness Through Art."

Kurt Vallenta / Franklin, VT: boys and girls what we're going to do is we're going to look for rotten logs. See Victoria found one that's really moist. Look there's a couple of them here. Check if you can get some segments that are pieces that are really moist and we can take back and look at them on the table. Because you know there's a lot of different little creatures that live in them. All these little animals that live in these logs do know what they do? They chew it up and they decompose it and they bring it back to earth. Do you see all this dirt here? Look I can see things in it already. There's a millipede right there looked see it right there. OK put it down and get your tools because these are the type of things we're going to be looking for. Their look his one that ever found. What do you think it is? Do you think it's a centipede? What did you find an ant? What is it why don't you look? A centipede. We had a lot of fun today looking at dead logs and you know what we're going to do tomorrow? We're going to try and build some of
these little insects and maybe we'll also do some casting of tree leaves because we'll do something different and look at that places where these insects live OK? So I hope you had a lot of fun.

Lyn Jarvis / VP Island Arts: Every summer, with the help of a grant from the Preservation Trust of Vermont, Island Arts hosts a summer concert series at the beautiful Grand Isle Lake House on the shores of Lake Champlain. All profits go to our Youth Scholarship Fund. The guests have started to arrive for a concert by the 17 member Vermont Jazz Ensemble. Opening for them, is the Island Arts Jazz Combo…made up of some of our youth scholarship recipients, directed by Island Arts Tony Pietricola.

Thank you Island Arts Combo and before the Vermont Jazz Ensemble performs, I have just time to tell you that we have 3 concerts coming up this summer at the Grand Isle Lake House. June 24-Will Patton Ensemble … July 15-Banjo Dan & the Mid-night Plowboys … July 29-Bluegrass Gospel Project Picnicking on the lawn begins at 5:30 p.m. and show time is 6:30 p.m. for the 3 concerts. And now the Vermont Jazz Ensemble. (Music)

Thanks for the tour Lyn. Back here in the studio I'm with island arts volunteer Susan Davis. In addition to the concerts a grand isle lake house you have three others to tell us about.

Susan.: I do and if you'll pardon me I'm going to read some of these only because I don't want to get the date's wrong. On July 7 we have at the south hero congregational church at 7:00 Melodeon and they're going to perform a concert there from New York City and they're making their very first appearance in the state of Vermont and they're known for their 19th century music that's going to be wonderful and fascinating. Then we go to August 24 at 630 and a gentleman by the name of Killick is going to be performing at camp Engles which is in north hero it's actually fairly easy to find follow the signs and Killick uses an unusual instrument.

Judy.: I've never heard of this.

Susan.: I have a hard time pronouncing it it's called a harpeggione it's a combination of a lot from guitar to harp to mandolin to all sorts of things that he has made and has also written the music for that and that really fascinating. Then later that day at the north hero community hall are which is gorgeous it's been completely redone and it's wonderful at 8:00 there's this young pianist and this is his third visit with us. His name is Yang Bao and he is absolutely phenomenal to hear. The acoustics in the community hall are wonderful and you get two experiences and his love of music and his talent. Last year it was SRO and just applause applause applause he was absolutely wonderful.

Judy.: With the moments remaining let's talk a little bit about the academy courses that are held the summer?

Susan.: The academy is actually an ongoing program that runs year round but the emphasis is on the summer. Courses that we offer year round we have Tai Chi for adults and we have a variety of other small events there's yoga and things like that but in the summer there's a concentration on programs for adults and children. Things like digital photographs how to edit them and store them without losing them. There's watercolor classes where you can paint on planair or you can do studio work. There's programs for the children in music and there is a wonderful wonderful science camp that runs a weeklong for children and it's phenomenal.

Judy.: We should tell people if they want information on all these programs of island arts summer events you have a couple of options. You can call this phone number (802)-372-8889 or you can go online to island arts.org again that's 372-8889 or online island arts.org and fill your calendar.

Susan.: O absolutely fill your calendar and come to the islands. It's a wonderful magical place it really is.

Judy.: Thank you so much.

Susan.: You're welcome thank you.
Judy.: That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson will see you again next time on Across the Fence.

Across the Fence is brought to you as a public service by University of Vermont Extension and WCAX TV.