



COMMUNITY

Turkey Land Cove Foundation Celebrates 100 Motivated Women

By [Louisa Hufstader](#) Sunday, April 9, 2017 - 5:51pm Vineyard Gazette

PROVIDENCE, R.I. --- At Tree House Two, a private retreat on the shores of Edgartown Great Pond, a 69-year-old lay minister prepared for her ordination in 2014. Circus and dance performers have spent time there working on their acts. Musicians have written songs, authors have refined manuscripts and visual and fiber artists have created new works.

In all, since 2011, 100 women have accepted grants from the Turkey Land Cove Foundation to spend one or two off-season weeks in creative isolation, with studio space and meals provided, to pursue individual goals of all kinds: artistic, professional and personal.

“You’re being handed a baton of creative expression,” said Laura Lind-Blum of Waterbury, Vt., who worked on a book during her two-week stay last fall. “It’s an incredible invitation to create, and I felt an incredible desire to live up to it.”



Fiber artist Hayley Perry sells her wares at Saturday event. Ms. Perry spent her Treehouse residency creating an e-commerce website for her business, Loop by Loop. — *Louisa Hufstader*

Ms. Lind-Blum and more than 70 other Tree House Two alumnae, along with Turkey Land Cove Foundation board members, staffers and founder Kitty Burke, gathered over the weekend at the Biltmore hotel in Providence to celebrate their 100-woman milestone. It was a chance for the women to meet their peers, share their work and trade stories about their experiences at Tree House Two, which Ms. Burke built with grantees in mind as she was constructing her own home on Turkey Land Cove.

The idea, Ms. Burke said, was to provide women with the space, time and privacy they don't get in their daily life and work — as a friend had done for her years ago, when she was a young, newly-divorced mother of four.

“At a crossroads in my life, I was given a place to put my head together and figure out what I wanted to do with my life,” Ms. Burke said. “It was a really wonderful thing, and I wanted to give it back.”

Many of the authors, artists and artisans in the alumnae group displayed, and some sold, their work at tables during the weekend event. Hayley Perry of Warren, R.I., creates hooked wool rugs and pillow designs, including kits for do-it-yourselfers. She spent her Tree House Two residency building the e-commerce website for her business, Loop by Loop, so she would no longer have to rely on her husband, who originally built the online site.

“I needed to be independent,” Ms. Perry said.

Artist and community college professor Debra Eck of Jamestown, N.Y., used her Turkey Land retreat to try out an idea she had, combining the crafts of embroidery and bookbinding. She emerged with a new art form that she's now teaching others. At the Biltmore, she showed handmade books whose spines were cross-stitched with traditional designs and slogans including “Women's Work is Never Done.”

“This has gone on to be an enormous body of work,” Ms. Eck said.



Turkey Land founder Kitty Burke (center) with staffers at celebration. — *Louisa Hufstader*

One floor up from the table shows, other alumnae offered 15-minute talks on many subjects, including both journal writing and “how not to write a book,” how to write and record a musical album in two weeks and the history of the American Committee for Devastated France, a

women's group that sought to relieve hunger and suffering in villages along the Western Front during World War I.

Carand Burnet of Easthampton, a two-time Turkey Land Cove grantee, talked about her work-in-progress, a personal memoir about how she discovered the history of 19th-century Martha's Vineyard poet and chicken doctor Nancy Luce.

"I thought of her as a kindred spirit when I first heard about her," said Ms. Burnet, a freelance writer and poet who, like Ms. Luce, has written verses about her pet chickens.

The alumnae group's performing artists showed their work during an after-dinner performance in the top-floor Biltmore ballroom Saturday night. The program of storytelling, drama, music and dance began with a participatory warmup led by dancer Laura Careless and a beguiling performance by Nettie Lane and Christie Cahill in which the two acrobatic dancers spun across the ballroom floor on, in and around great metal circus wheels.

The evening also included a benediction by the Rev. Annie Houghton, who after 35 years of active ministry was ordained at age 70 following her stay at Tree House Two in 2014. While praising the "community of motivated women" that has come out of the Turkey Land Cove Foundation grant program, Reverend Houghton also spoke on behalf of the group to Ms. Burke.

"We see you, we bless you, we thank you, we appreciate you and all your hard work, and we love you," she said to a room full of applause.