

Photographer's Front Porch Project – paying it forward

By **CAROL R. EMMENS**
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Professional photographer Mary Pat Myers launched an innovative project to assist those in need of food and basic personal items: The Front Porch Project.

She takes photographs of local residents on their front porch as they have to stay home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She does not accept payment for the photographs. Myers asks only that they donate to a food bank: non-perishable items especially foods with protein, gift certificates for a grocery store such as the ShopRite or Acme, or cash. She said she wants to “spread a bit of joy in these trying times” and help those in need as their number increases daily as more and more are unemployed.

Myers wants those photographed to “pay it forward,” which was the theme of the movie “Pay It Forward,” starring Kevin Spacey and Helen Hunt. It was produced in 2000, directed by Mimi Leder and based on the novel of the same name by Catherine Ryan Hyde, who used a real life experience as her inspiration. She was unable to pay back two men who helped put out her car fire and left; after months of thinking about it she decided to “pay it forward.”

The concept became popular and Pay It Forward Day was April 28. It started in Australia and spread to



85 countries around the world. There are all types of ways to “pay it forward” including going to a store for an elderly person, planting vegetables, sharing a skill on social media, or making masks – to name a few.

Myers is giving back by taking photographs to those who agree to give to food pantries such as The Lazarus House, Saint Barnabus Church Food Pantry, or the Cape May Community Food Closet or a local organiza-

tion of their choice. Leslie Flick, coordinator of the Saint Barnabus Food Pantry, especially encourages donating gift cards so the recipients can buy perishables such as milk.

Because of the distancing guidelines, Myers photographs her subject from at least 10 feet away and the session is short: five to 10 minutes. The digital photographs are emailed to the participants, put on her website and sent to Face-



Mary Pat Myers/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Photos by Mary Pat Myers.

At left is Marc Wrotney of Cape May Point and Tucker. Above, the Tester family, including Darleen (mom), Shawn (dad), Lola (older daughter), and Lucy (youngest).

book and Instagram.

Despite the troubling times, Myers said she wants those photographed to have “fun to stay sane.” She encourages them to dress up, hold signs, use props or even pose with their pets – pets willing, of course.

Cape May Mayor Chuck Lear was photographed with his wife Karen and said he was happy to participate. He said he was glad to help a food bank and noted Myers has “exceptional talent.”

“Her photographs speak,

and show the subjects in the best light. She makes us feel good about who we are and, sometimes it astounds us to see ourselves as she sees us,” Lear said.

Like Lear, Wendy Collins and Laura Shaddock, owners of award-winning Mission Inn, were pleased to have their photograph taken on the front porch of their popular bed and breakfast. They viewed the project as a “great idea to visually document this strange and isolating time

around town and create an opportunity for local homeowners to give back to the community.”

Collins said they made a donation to the Cape May Food Closet. Based on the needs of the Food Closet, they decided to pay it forward by purchasing 60 dozen eggs from a local business, Tony's Produce.

“We got a great photo, the Food Closet got a donation and Tony's got our business. That's a win-win-win!” Collins said.

Cape May Elementary gets national Green Ribbon award

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – The U.S. Department of Education declared Cape May Elementary School a Green Ribbon School based on its commitment to healthy, safe and sustainable learning environments.

Across the country, 39 schools, 11 districts, and five postsecondary institutions were honored for their innovative efforts to address the three “pillars” of the program: reducing environmental impact and utility costs, improving health and wellness, and ensuring effective sustainability education.

“I want to congratulate this year's U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School honorees for a job well done,” stated U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. “During this unprecedented time, it's a pleasure to celebrate these bright spots of creativity and to applaud the teachers and local education leaders who have worked to create healthy, sustainable, and innovative learning environments for their students.”

The honorees were named from a pool of candidates nominated by 27 states. The

Cape May opens beaches and Promenade

CAPE MAY – The city reopened its beaches and Promenade on May 2, according to an executive order from City Manager Jerry Inderwies.

He said the action was taken in conjunction with the decisions of the governor and Cape May County to reopen state and county parks and in an attempt to provide residents and visitors with the ability to engage in healthful physical activity, under conditions that protect the public health, safety and welfare.

On the city's beaches, walking, jogging, running, fishing and surfing will be allowed as long as the participants remain six feet apart, do not congregate in groups; and wear masks while passing near others. Sitting in chairs, or on blankets, picnicking or congregating in groups and other similar activities will remain prohibited.

On the Promenade, walking and jogging is permitted as long as the participants remain 6 feet apart and do not congregate in groups. Wearing masks/face coverings is encouraged and participants must refrain from using benches due to cross contamination health concerns.

Bicycle riding, skateboarding and roller-blading are prohibited on the Promenade. All restrooms will remain closed.

selectees include 28 public schools – among them, three magnet schools and four charter schools – as well as 11 nonpublic schools. Forty-five percent of the 2020 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body.

Cape May Elementary was nominated by the New Jersey Department of Education. The school serves 150 students, 42 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The school is a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation. Earth Club students, who oversee the edible school gardens and the composting and recycling programs, are currently completing their Sustainable Food pathway through Eco-Schools USA. Cape May Elementary School has participated in Sustainable Jersey for Schools, beginning in its inaugural year, earning a Bronze and two Silver certifications. This partnership has also resulted in three grants totaling \$6,000 to support recycling, composting, and gardening programs.

In 2012, the school was awarded Silver for the Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge, one of only two New Jersey schools to attain this distinction that year. Breakfast is served in classrooms to all students daily.

In addition to daily physical education, students participate in weekly swimming instruction in grades three to six, an annual field day, a triathlon, fall Walk-a-Thon, and regular brain breaks. In the library, fourth through

sixth-grade students are involved in a 10-month, county habitat study with a focus on the connections that are discovered during their explorations. In addition, all students learn about the Atlantic coast horseshoe crab/shorebird phenomenon and observing the baby horseshoe crabs as the school participates in the Green Eggs and Sand U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program.

In the fall of 2015, the school participated in a citywide energy audit, using ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager. Following this audit, an Energy Savings Improvement Plan resulted in completing the switchover to LED lights in all areas. This change was estimated to save more than \$3,000 a year. The school also uses BERT smart plugs, which are programmed to automatically shut off connected electronics from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. schoolwide. The estimated savings is \$5,000 to \$6,000 a year. The school campus wind turbine produces approximately \$400 in savings.

While the renovation of the swimming pool, reopened in 2017, after having been closed for five years, skews year-to-year utility use and savings data, the pool renovation itself included many conservation measures. One of the school's top initiatives since 2017 has been led by students – the reduction of single-use plastics and Styrofoam. Started by a student studying ocean pollution, the school took the steps

to make the switch from plastic utensils to metal, phased out plastic straws, replaced Styrofoam soup cups with reusable mugs, and switched Styrofoam coffee cups and plates for compostable paper products. The school is continuing to reduce its plastic waste stream through new reusable salad containers, recycling campaigns, three additional water bottle filling stations, and participation in the TREX Plastic Film Challenge.

Cape May police sponsor a bike safety event and Coast Guard students arriving on a bus account for 36 percent of students. No-riding signage and a pledge is distributed to families. Nearly all of CMCES' cleaning products are Green Seal certified. CMCES implements and indoor air quality plan and is certified an Asthma Friendly School through the Asthma Coalition of New Jersey.

“I am extremely proud with the hard work that my faculty, staff, students, parents, and community have put into this initiative,” Principal Zachary Palombo stated. “They have truly created a culture in our school that is environmentally focused. For many years our students and faculty have participated in projects of various sizes in the ongoing effort to help our students understand the value and meaning of what it means to “Go Green.” To get recognition from both the state and federal level is truly an honor for our little school by the seashore.”

“This is such a wonderful honor for our school community,” stated teacher and Green Team coordinator Sandy Sandmeyer-Bryan.

“Our dedication to provide environmental education, opportunities for civic engagement, along with exemplary health and wellness initiatives is very exciting to celebrate. I am thank-

ful that the Department of Education in New Jersey supports this program and encourages the work that schools are doing for sustainable futures.”

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To shepherd can be defined as to watch over carefully, to guide, to protect, and to feed, either spiritually or physically. We all probably have at least one earthly shepherd. It may be a parent, a pastor, an educator, or a good friend. Although these people are here to help and give us strength in times of need, they may sometimes fall short of our expectations. However, our Heavenly Father is a perfect Shepherd. We, with our limited knowledge may not understand His ways, or why certain things may happen. Like little children, who don't know why they must be subject to the doctor's vaccination, we sometimes can't see God's plan for us. The Bible tells us all things happen for the good of those who love the Lord, and putting our trust in Him will not eliminate our adversities, but it will help us to better accept them.

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