

Celebrate gifts of talented Cape Codders

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Columnist



Gulls by Adam Liss provided by Lawrence Brown

Let's start with a joke. You see, there's this preacher who rails against the evils of golf. (He'd rather see the golfers in church.) But his home is right next to a golf course, and wouldn't you know, he sneaks out early on a Sunday morning and tees up. Up in heaven, Saint Peter looks down on the scene and nudges God in the ribs. *'Look at this hypocrite!'*

he cries. 'After everything he says about golf!'

God says, 'I'll fix him.' But the preacher tees off and hits a hole in one!

St. Peter's almost frantic. 'You said you'd fix him!' he cries.

God smiles knowingly. 'So, who's he gonna tell about it?'

This is a joke with a point. And it has to do with artists and photographers and musicians and sculptors alike. What's the point of creating something magnificent if there's nobody there to see it?

Every winter, the Hyannis Public Library runs a young photographers' contest. We get beautiful work from fifth graders all the way up to seniors. At the end of every contest, prizes are awarded... cash prizes are given out... and now what? Of course it's on a big screen at the library. But here's where our story takes its first twist.



Beach Grass by Michelle Lewison provided by Lawrence Brown

For our third year running, the Cape Cinema in Dennis has been offering the contest galleries on their big screen just before showing their movies. It's a marriage made in heaven. Movie patrons get a free art show. Our young photographers get a grateful audience. It's another reason why people might want to go there. Everybody wins.

Here's the second thread of our good news. Every year right about now, the Academy of Lifelong Learning publishes its catalogue of courses for the upcoming year. (www.capecodall.org) There are courses on the military history of Cape Cod, learning how to play bridge, discussion groups on current events, evolution and the molecular basis of life. There are courses on health and aging, investing, writing poems, short stories and essays, Courses on theology and philosophy... *you really need to look at the catalogue* . There are pages of offerings, things that people from 50 and up can learn about and the communities of friends that form naturally when we do.



Foggy morning in New Orleans Beth Taylor provided by Contributed by Lawrence Brown

This fall, I'll be teaching a religion and a history course, but I frequently teach photography in the program... and in other times and places, I teach school kids. And here's where several more pieces of good news fit together.

The next time you take in a movie at Cape Cinema, there will be a new gallery showing before the film. This time, the photographs have been taken by adults, students from a previous class. Given their age, these folks have had the opportunity to travel all over the world. And through the classes, they've had a chance to sharpen their skills in editing as well as in the photography itself, and their collected work is fantastic.

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Work this good, like a hole in one, deserves an audience —and thanks to the Cape Cinema, they have one. There is so much talent out here that there is no limit to all the wonderful things to see. In the coming months, we hope the theater will offer new galleries from individual photographers and groups. Some will be thematic, like wildlife photography, portraits, street photography.

Street photography is the opposite of portraiture. In street photography, you just find a nice well-trafficked spot and pick your shots as the world goes by. Nothing is rehearsed.

This summer, I wanted to offer a multi-generational photography clinic. The Hyannis Public Library (my favorite spot) is just beginning what will become a total renovation of the whole place. Not just restoration, but the addition of whole new spaces and opportunities. Fortunately, the Osterville Village Library offered us space there.

May I mention as an aside that modern libraries are far more than just repositories of books and magazines. Modern libraries have become civic centers where all kinds of good things are available to their communities, free of charge.

For six weeks this summer, we've been trying an experiment. A bunch of senior photographers from my classes joined some gifted high school students. In one case, I had a mother (a high school teacher) and her ninth grade son sitting side by side. I knew the boy was good, but his mother's work was a revelation. It was collaborative, not competitive — and what better subjects for portraits could a mother have than her own children?

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The best part, besides seeing a lot of really good work, we're seeing the collaborations that spontaneously developed between the older folk with all their experience and the tech-savvy kids who tended to pick up the graphic apps a little faster. Imagine similar collaborations in poetry and music.

No matter what your age, if you're going kind of buggy with nothing to do, check out your local libraries. I'll be amazed if you don't find something to like. And check out the Academy for Lifelong Learning for exactly the same reasons. And go see a movie at the Cape Cinema and see the artistic expertise of your neighbors grace the screen before your movie even starts.

Best of all, the dots are beginning to connect in a wonderful way: what some of our artistic kids are doing... what some of our artistic adults are doing... and all the chances for creativity, scholarship and friendship in the ALL program, in libraries across the Cape, and even on the big screen at the Cape Cinema, which, by the way, is just a very short walk from the Cape Cod Museum of Art. Lucky us.

