

Rene Haag

Rene Haag, studied Literature and Photography at Montana State University and the University of Montana from 1977-1982, when she moved to Alaska to pursue what she anticipated would be a two-three year adventure in the Last Frontier. She worked as the area manager for a chain of camera stores for 4 years then took the management position at Blaines Art Supply in 1986.

After a few years with the company, she convinced the owners of Blaines to allow her to orchestrate a free Art Day for the families of our community. The event, Save Art Fair, has been happening at Blaines now for 19 years with 10-12 free art & craft events and the Community mural Painting close to the Solstice in June.

Rene thinks of Blaines as the community's art store and in an effort to give back to the community of artists and patrons, she began another annual event called Raw Materials, where she brings artists and vendors from the lower 48 to offer free workshops and demonstrations at the store for 3 days. This year will be the 19th annual event.

After 12 years of managing the store, the opportunity to purchase the business arose and she jumped at the chance to own the business she had become so attached to over the years. She is now on her 14th year of owning Blaines and has recently had a new store built and moved into the new location on Photo Avenue, a stone's throw away from where Blaines has been since 1953.

Ms. Haag, has a strong belief of giving back to her community and has served on the Board of Directors for the International Gallery of Contemporary Art when it was in it's infancy, past Director for the Alaska Photographic Center and currently serves on the Board for the North Star Business Association, Spenard Farmer's Market and the Alaska Photographic Center, all non-profit organizations. She is also on the advisory board of the King Career Center and the Small Business Development Center. She has been a supporter of several Anchorage and Valley schools, donating her time and supplies to projects that encourage education of the arts, in disadvantaged areas as well as in private and optional schools. Blaines is also a sponsor for the Partners in Education program through the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts and has received an honorary award from the Anchorage School District, for service to our schools. Blaines has become a business to school partner with Steller School, and has been awarded the 2010, Spirit of Youth award.

Memberships: Alaska Artist Guild, Alaska Watercolor Society, Alaska Photographic Center, East Anchorage Rotary, Spenard Public Safety Committee, Spenard Road Advisory Committee, President of Spenard Community Council, Board of Directors and co-founder of Spenard Farmers market. She is a member of the East Anchorage Rotary and will be on the incoming BOD for the 2011/2012 season beginning in June.

Rene has been a supporter of the American Cancer Society and Breast Cancer Research for the past several years as well as having provided support to the Muscular Dystrophy

Association along with other local foundations. One of her favorite charities is Helping Hand for Nepal, providing people with money for emergency health assistance. Beginning this year, Rene will head a new charity to offer micro-loans to the women of Nepal, so they can start and grow their businesses to feed their families.

Rene had several solo photography shows before purchasing Blaines Art Supply and on one occasion, took on the project of photographing the homeless in Anchorage, to help bring those most disadvantaged in our community into a more positive light. She worked for 6 months at Bean's Café and the Brother Francis Shelter before capturing one image and continued to serve there at least twice a week for 12 months through the duration of the project. The exhibit, titled Family Album, was on display at the Visual Art Center.