

Helen Addison: The Art Of Community

by Jennifer Sexton-Riley

Ask a few people about Helen Addison of Addison Art Gallery in Orleans, and you'll immediately begin to get a warm and colorful impression

Whether you ask an artist in her gallery, the proprietor of a neighboring business, a new visitor who has just met Addison or a collector who has been coming to the gallery for years, the same descriptions are offered. Addison is warm and welcoming to visitors, fiercely dedicated to her gallery and its artists, a committed supporter of the local arts community, and the hardest working person many have ever met. She creates not only a beautiful space in which to enjoy local art, but also a sense of camaraderie and friendship in the Addison Gallery's little red house. Addison is known as much for her support of the greater Cape Cod community as she is for her support of the arts, regularly hosting events to raise funds and awareness for a wide variety of local issues and organizations in the community.

Born in New York City, Addison grew up in a home full of art created by family based both in Europe and in the United States. She studied art in Europe while an undergraduate. After earning an MBA at Cornell University, including an internship in New York City, with experience fundraising for WOMR and managing a business strategy for a local paper, she founded an advertising and public relations agency, Addison and Associates, which



Helen Addison. STEPHANIE FOSTER PHOTO

went on to win over 70 regional, national and international awards for creative excellence and marketing effectiveness. After experiencing a great deal of success in the corporate world, Addison found herself spending a summer on the Outer Cape. It was a visit that would change the course of her life.

"I knew I could work in a city and vacation or own a second home on Cape Cod," Addison said. "Better yet, I could live on Cape Cod."

With the encouragement of local artists,

Addison opened the Addison Art Gallery almost 30 years ago. In that time, the Addison Art Gallery has represented emerging and master artists from across the United States, Canada and France. In addition to promoting and displaying the work of many artists, both local and international, Addison Art Gallery is valued as an integral part of the community for its support of local businesses and charitable organizations. An incomplete list of the non-profit organizations supported by Addison Gallery through donations and events over the years includes Cape Cod Children's Place, Cape Cod Commercial Fisherman's Alliance, Cape Cod Foster Closet, Cape Cod Healthcare, Cape Wellness Collaborative, Center for Coastal Studies, Cornell Club of Cape Cod, Dexter Keezer Community Fund, Doctors without Borders, Eastham Public Library, Family Pantry of Cape Cod, Helping Our Women, Homeless Prevention Council, Humane Society, Lower Cape Outreach Council, Lower Cape TV, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Orleans Conservation Trust, Orleans Improvement Society, Orleans Pond Coalition, Outer Cape Health Services, Truro Historical Society, Truro Public Library, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater, Wellfleet Public Library, Wild Care and WOMR.

When asked what it's like running a gallery on Cape Cod for nearly three decades, Addison revealed her deep love for the gallery, the community and her work.

"The art on the walls surrounding my desk is always something I love, and it is continually changing," Addison said. "I am privileged to meet so many kind and interesting people – artists, collectors, others exploring what the gallery and the Cape has to share. The gallery provides opportunities to meet artists and art lovers, to become a part of a community with people who live here year round, seasonal residents, and those who visit year after year from around the country and across the pond."

While her work has taken Addison around the globe to many fascinating places, she loves to return to her Truro home and South Orleans gallery. Asked about what makes the area so special, Addison shares her favorite aspects of home.

"Truro ponds, the beaches on the bay and oceanside, Cape Cod National Seashore paths, secret hiking areas, incredible residents, four seasons of energizing weather, intriguing history, native plants – flowers, fruits – library, art center, farms, distinctive shops, a winery and chocolate factory," Addison said. "I've been a traveler, just before the pandemic, to Morocco, Egypt and a return trip to Santa Fe. I've studied, traveled and visited family in Europe, taken many trips in the states and dozens of trips to and around the Caribbean and Central America. With a business in Orleans, my house and gardens in Truro, and friends throughout the region, while I love to travel, I love coming home to Cape Cod."