

**Summer 2014
Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney**

Hills and Hollow Report



Submitted by

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Name of Organization: Green Mountain College

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Program Name: Summer 2014 Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Period that this report covers: 07/1/14 to 10/31/14

Summary of Accomplishments:

1. Held **six weeks of arts and community-building programming** for all local people, of all ages, with four barn quilt camps and interactive arts events over summer 2014 which helped build community ties.
2. Created **twenty beautiful barn quilts**, all distinctive and painted by many hands, but with the same color palette of five colors
3. Collaboratively **mounted a barn quilts** on businesses and homes ranging from the village of Poultney to East Poultney. This outdoor exhibit is a “trail” that brings visual continuity across Poultney and symbolically links buildings of East Poultney, west Main Street, Poultney, and Green Mountain College campus.
4. **Poultney Barn Quilt Trail map and other outreach materials** (including Facebook page) for Stonebridge visitors center and other distribution community-wide.
5. Positive **public relations coverage** for Poultney and Green Mountain College partnership in regional and local media (**see Figures 1-4 in body of report for specific articles and appendices**).
6. **Public presentation by community arts organizer** in residence (Jason Jansen) on August 9th, 2014.
7. **Raised funds for the Poultney Historical Society** via a raffle at East Poultney Day (August 9, 2014) of one of the barn quilts by Jason Jansen.
8. **Partnerships strengthened between Green Mountain College, Town of Poultney, Poultney Historical Society, and businesses /residents in Poultney** who worked on this project and donated outdoor building space for exhibited barn quilts.

I. Project Description

The Summer 2014 Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney project began as collaboration between the Green Mountain College Sustainability Office (Outreach Coordinator, José Gálvez Contreras) and the Green Mountain College Summer Farm Program (Professor Eleanor Tison). Under this directorship, the project allocated the Hills & Hollows funds to sponsor a **Community Arts Organizer for Poultney**, Jason Jansen, based at Cerridwen Farm at Green Mountain College in July and August of 2014. The goal of this project was to bring this experienced community arts organizer to Poultney to build civic engagement and community pride through leading interested or motivated residents through the group creation of an communal art project that could remain visibly on display throughout Poultney as a legacy of this 2014 effort.

The Summer 2014 Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney led to the **creation of twenty Barn Quilts [BQ]**, a series of decoratively painted wooden boards of two size categories, five of which are 4' X 4' and fifteen of which are 2' X 2' (see Appendix A). These quilts were painted by amateur and professionals alike in vibrant, colorful designs, exhibiting themes and ideas of their creators own choosing. In the fall of 2014, after the arts organizer's residency ended, these **works were mounted as permanent displays on buildings across the community marking a Poultney Barn Quilt Trail**.

As the culmination of his residency this summer, community arts organizer Jason Jansen personally created one of the 4' X 4' Barn Quilts (*see Figure 1*) as a grand prize for the raffle to benefit the Poultney Historical Society during that organization's East Poultney Day on August 9, 2014. Mr. Jansen also delivered a Q & A session during East Poultney Day about this project, and concurrently on the Green during the event attendees created the final community barn quilt that completed the collection.

The barn quilts now can be seen in Poultney on the following buildings:

1. Home of Wilma Reed (won by sister, Velma Reed in the PHS raffle) on River Street in East Poultney,
2. Home of Carol Morash (East Poultney),
3. The East Poultney General Store,
4. The East Poultney General Store barn,
5. Stackpole Landscaping, East Main Street,
6. Poultney Discount Foods,
7. Williams True Value Hardware,
8. The Trolley Stop (left facade),
9. The Trolley Stop,
10. Café Paziienza,
11. The Poultney Public Library,
12. The GMC President's Carriage Barn,
13. The GMC Solar Harvest Center,
14. The GMC Cerridwen Farm Main Barn.



Figure 1. Barn quilt for East Poultney Day raffle

The six remaining boards will be mounted by Green Mountain student volunteers on Thanks & Giving Day, Tuesday, November 18th, 2014, on additional community buildings, including probably: Poultney High School, Poultney Elementary School, LiHigh School, Katie's Educational Center, Leapfrog Preschool, Stone Valley Community Market, or the Young at Heart Center.

II. Accomplishments & Evaluation

The Summer 2014 Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney accomplishments included: A) **the creation of public events and activities** that were creative, fun, community arts opportunities for many residents. B) **The strengthening of partnerships and collaboration** between Green Mountain College, local schools, businesses, and community organizations in Poultney, and C) **enhancement of the visual vibrancy and unity of public spaces in the Poultney Area.**

A. Public Events & Activities featuring Community Arts Organizer in Action:

During the six-week long period in summer of 2014 that Jason Jansen was resident, he led numerous events and programs in July-August. The main events/activities are listed below:

1. **Barn Quilt Camp** (all ages two weeks) & **Farmin' Fun Camp** (three weeks). 8-10 participants/week=**50 total participants.**
2. **Flavors of the Farm Community Free Dinner** (Friday, July 25th) @ Cerridwen Farm, Green Mountain College; **200+ participants**
3. **East Poultney Day** (August 9th) Community Art/ Barn Quilt demo and collaborative project. (**300 participants**, 9am-3pm). **Barn Quilt Grand Prize** for RAFFL @ EPD benefited the Poultney Historical Society (see Appendix B).
4. **Thanks & Giving Day "Ribbon Cutting"** and **final six BQ mounting** (November 18th)-*forthcoming*, anticipating **150 participants.**

TOTAL: ~ 400 Poultney residents will have directly participated in public events and activities.

The 400+ beneficiaries of the public events and activities related to the project who picked up the brush to paint on a BQ were of all ages (children, families, college students, other adults), and, included several solo artists (Melissa Kristianson, Poultney Artists Guild and Poultney High School art teacher, a Poultney High School student, and a Poultney Elementary School student).

Mr. Jansen gave participants a great deal of autonomy in embellishing their quilt paintings, but in order to maintain harmony with both the natural and social landscape of Poultney, he took responsibility for the "color theory" and composition of the designs. One participating student said, "It was fun and inspiring to be given only limited color options, and to know my work would be on view to all every day!" Another participant said "The barn quilts bring an artistic element of colors to the town. This is an innovative project and Green Mountain College has done right to the town."

Additionally, Jason assisted in organizing the second annual Green Mountain College Summer Program's *Flavors of the Farm* event, which invited all Poultney Community members for a free, healthy, farm-sourced meal prepared by the summer students at the end of July. Barn quilts completed at that point were exhibited around Green Mountain College farm during the dinner.

B. Summer 2014 Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney built & strengthened Partnerships

Both, individuals (people) and institutions (organizations) forged new relationships, or strengthened existing ties through cooperating on all stages of this project. The experience of creating BQs together was characterized by surprises like residents Bob and Deb Buciak bringing cookies to share with Barn Quilt Camp kids and their families in July as they met and were hard at work painting. Mr. Jensen had a gift for enthusiastically encouraging young and old to join in, and even become excited about the project whether or not they touched a brush to paint.

This partnership building continued on into the stage of mounting the BQs on buildings into the fall. Partners who benefited

- Green Mountain College Development Office (~3)
- Green Mountain College DTZ Employees & families (~2, especially Bill Ballard)
- Cerridwen Farm Summer Farm Program (~16) and CSA Members (~42)
- Green Mountain College REED Program (~5, especially Cody Gaylord, Danny Lang)
- Green Mountain College summer student workers and (~40+ total)
- LiHigh School (summer special ed. program, ~9)
- Local Businesses (~15)
- Poultney Area Artist Guild (~10)
- Poultney High School Summer Portfolio Prep and Art Exploration open studio (~10)
- Poultney Historical Society/East Poultney Day (~400)
- Poultney Town Hall
- Stone Valley Arts members (~30)
- Town of Poultney Recreation Farmin' Fun Program (~40)
- Williams Hardware Store

C. BQ Trail enhances Visual Vibrancy & Unity of Public Spaces in Poultney Area

Another accomplishment of the BQ project was to enhance community pride and aesthetic unity of the community via display of the barn quilts on a variety of buildings that are visible from the sidewalk or road as people pass through town. Beneficiaries in these cases have been the partner organizations, institutions, residents, and businesses of our local area that have ended up displaying a barn quilt on their building. Also, beneficiaries are really everyone who walks or drives by these prominently displayed works. Interest in this trail can grow to become a tourist attraction for visitors and residents alike, a fun “trail” to follow and play “spot the barn quilt” moving from Green Mountain College, through Main Street Poultney, into East Poultney (and vice versa).

To facilitate this type of experience of the project, a Barn Quilt Trail map will be featured on the new Poultney Community Outreach Facebook page, have its own dedicated Facebook page, and in brochure form, will be distributed to all residents via schools and businesses in town, and made available at the Poultney Welcome Center at the Stonebridge for outside visitors. The effectiveness of the Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney can also be indicated by the regional publicity that has widened awareness of this project (**See Appendix C & D for GMC Journal and Rutland Herald coverage**).

III. Funding Sources

Green Mountain College (GMC) is an institution with strong commitment to strengthening relationship with the town of Poultney. GMC financially supported the inception of the Summer 2014 Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney in three ways.

1. GMC allowed faculty and staff to dedicate some of their work time to plan, coordinate, and ensure proper implementation of the program during the summer of 2014.
2. The college campus farm was the primary host of the program and gave opportunities for the artist and the Poultney community to take advantage of the campus resources available to them.
3. Additionally, artist Jason Jansen was able to taste some of the many delicious vegetables grown at GMC's Cerridwen farm as he was awarded a share during his stay in Poultney.

Without the grant awarded from Hills and Hollow; however, Community Arts Collaboration for Poultney program would have not been possible. The funds covered cost of materials necessary for the barn quilts, as well as the artist's stipend and living expenses. This is why strong partnerships and cross-collaboration are important in communities when the opportunities present themselves. As has been demonstrated in this report, there are many successes that came out of bringing this program to Poultney.

Breakdown of how funding was spent:

Budget Expenses	\$
Materials	\$300.00
Mounting Costs (REED Program)	\$400.00
Barn Quilt Trail Map Prints	\$100.00
Living Expenses	\$1,200.00
Artist Stipend	\$3,000.00
TOTAL	\$5,000.00

IV. Lessons Learned & Sustainability of the Project

Three Key lessons learned:

1. **Open communication always works best.** This project was possible due to effective coordination and communication since its inception. Particularly, the effectiveness of open communication showed when MaryLou Willits, Director of Development, provided assistance to get GMC's DTZ employees, such as Bill Ballard, and the REED program involved to help mount the quilts. Now

the quilts are mounted and they serve as a beautiful attraction for Poultney residents and anyone who visits the area.

2. **Critical to keep arts coordinator resident within the community.** Jason Jensen lived on Main Street and walked around town daily to make his presence known and visible to town residents. Every time he could he would engage in conversation with local business owners to talk about the BQ project with them. Jason being GMC alum was also helpful, as he already had built community ties.
3. **Creation of partnership leads to creative collaborations.** Particularly in the final stage of this project (fall 2014), the technicalities and logistics of mounting the barn quilts on different buildings across the town were difficult. However, after seeking support from the Renewable Energy and Ecological Design (REED) Program at GMC, DTZ staff and GMC staff, these challenges were overcome. The DTZ staff and faculty/students in the REED program made use of their skills and hardware toolkit to mount the quilts around town in September (and will assist again in November). The group had a lot of fun while in the process and they had the chance to connect with community members in a meaningful way.

V. Conclusion

In sum, this project has been successful in meeting its goals. It is also the foundation for future summer community arts projects, serving as both inspiration and model for other collaborative endeavors (possibly even MORE barn quilts). There will always be a need in the future of our small town for more opportunities for fun, arts and community building programming for residents. We hope this small project will continue to inspire future projects and partnerships between people and across organizations in town. We know the Poultney Barn Quilt Trail will continue to provide Poultney with brilliant splashes of color in shades of green, yellow, lavender and bright pink to cheer us all as the winter snows begin to fly.

APPENDIX A. Photos of twelve-mounted barn quilts as of 11/31/14. Missing Stackpole Landscaping on East Main Street.



Home of Velma Reeds (won by sister, Wilma Reed on raffle) on River St. in East Poultney



Home of Carol Morash in East Poultney



East Poultney General Store



East Poultney General Store Barn



Poultney Discount Store



Williams True Value Hardware Store



Trolley Stop



Café Paziienza



Poultney Public Library



GMC President Carriage Barn



GMC Solar Harvest Center



GMC Cerridwen Farm Main Barn