

Valley Center Art Gallery

All great enterprises start with imagination. That is what conspired when Gloria Warren and Barbara Scharnau visited the Fallbrook Art Center in April of 2019. They asked each other, “Why don’t we have an art gallery in Valley Center?”

Barbara and Gloria had been members of the Valley Center Art Association for many years and the next VCAA show at the library Bob Lerner, President of the History Museum approached Barbara and said, “Barb, you need to have an art gallery and I’m going to tell you how to get one.” Since Lerner was instrumental in bringing the History Museum into existence, she knew that he could help them.

They got their heads together with Jim Courter, a fellow artist and went over what they would have to do to start their project. They contacted the county and started the process of becoming a non-profit organization.

November of 2019 PJ Campbell and Sandy Zelasko joined. The emphasis was on raising awareness. PJ was working with Sandy developing, and keeping the website current. 2020 was to be a year of gathering board members and developing roles according to their talents, and assigning titles.

Then March 15, 2020 the Covid Pandemic hit and things came to a halt. All government offices were closed.

In 2021 the group started planning again, and PJ Campbell’s role was Personal Relations, Marketing and Event Planning. Her husband Matt Dimakos was their photographer for events and the website. Barbara was Treasurer and Gloria was the Secretary.

John Dominie was the architect that did the renderings for the Art Gallery to be located on the Northeast side of the History Museum. The idea is to have a cultural center where the Library, The History Museum, and the Art Gallery are all together in the same complex.

The VCAG is unique in its focus on the wildlife of Valley Center. This is a common goal of many environmental groups which motivated the VCAG to partner with CONNECT, an environmental group that includes Escondido Chamber of Citizens, Friends of Hellhole Canyon, Valley Center Trails, Friends of Dailey Ranch, San Pasqual Valley Preservation Alliance, and many others.

July 25th, 2021 Cosmic Solar sponsored a CONNECT event at Joaquin Aganza's home. The meeting brought together environmental groups and they discussed how artists support the preservation of North County's open space, sensitive habitat and wildlife corridors. In attendance was former Mayor of Escondido Jerry Harmon, now Director at Escondido citizens Ecology Committee, Sierra Club, San Diego Chapter.

VCAG's mixed-media artist Barbara Scharnau, and nationally recognized wildlife photographer, Sandy Zelasko addressed the attendees on the significance of nature-centric art and how it has helped to raise awareness and thousands of dollars in support of North County's open space preservation and protection of flora and fauna. As Zelasko put it, "As an artist it is imperative to stir emotions in our viewers. Emotion ignites passion and passion promotes action."

The meeting adjourned with a surprise as Judith & Bahram Shadzi, owners of Cosmic Solar and Roofing presented Barbara Scharnau with a \$5000 donation.

May 24, 2022 PJ Campbell and Barb Scharnau spoke at the Valley Center Business Association's 2nd Partners in Excellence - Annual Meeting at Bates Nut Farm. They shared their desire to design this facility from the ground up. Children will have their own art wall, and so would Native Americans. Outside would be a sculpture garden. Scharnau said, "We will be the cultural hub for the community and interact with the history museum and the library."

The VCAG envisions a space where Valley Center artists, surrounding communities, and the tribal community will display a variety of art media including painting, photography, drawing, sculpture, pottery, acoustic productions and all forms of creativity. Everyone will be welcome to learn and share their art.

The plan is to raise \$2.8 million for a 4,000 square foot structure that would match the Library and History Museum. The renderings by architect John Domini and Associates were on display.

Four paintings were auctioned off. Baby foxes by local artist Joyce Brettell, a tree frog by Judith Shadzi, and two oil paintings by famed Collector Plate Artist Rusty Money Church. These paintings were given to Shadzi by Melinda Smylie and her sister Tricia Satterlee. These two paintings had been commissioned by their father, Attorney John Smylie. The Smylie family said they wanted to help raise money for building the Valley Center Art Gallery. The VCBA donated half of the proceeds to the VCAG.

Other events Campbell maned a VCAG table was the June 9th Bee & Butterfly event at the Library, and Picnic in the Park at Butterfield's Ranch. Laura Adolf instructed young artists on an active children's mural project.

Zee Ryken and Carolyn McGraw became involved helping plan the VCAG's premiere fundraising event in July of 2022. It was sponsored by Cosmic Solar & Roofing, and was held at Gloria Warren's home bordering Rancho Guejito. Over 85 guests enjoyed canapes, sandwiches, steak tartar, shrimp and a variety of other delicacies supplied in part by Chef Will and Country Junction Deli. Live music was by Greg Douglass, guitarist and Sheldon Rosenbaum, pianist. 24 works of art were donated by 16 local area artists. Beer was provided by the Rincon Reservation Road Brewery and the Rancho Guejito Vineyard donated wine.

Two guests commented, "Valley Center Art Gallery's Board of Directors proved to the community that the time has come to have our own art gallery. The experience today is one that you might expect to have in Rancho Santa Fe, it's right here! Bravo."

Adrienne Cismerros-Selekman, community relations liaison from Supervisor Jim Desmond's office presented the VCAG with a certificate of commendation for enriching the community through local artists and works of art.

February 13, 2023 the VCAG attended the Valley Center Community Planning Group meeting. Laura Adolph introduced the group and Zee Ryken showed her power point presentation. Laura added, "The library has been very good to us but it's time to grow."

Barbara Scharnau shared how important it is to have an art center for the young people of our community.

The county would need to donate the land, but VCAG would be responsible for raising the funds to build and lease back to the county a permanent 4000 square foot gallery devoted to the arts. About 2500 SF would be devoted to gallery displays.

June 24th, 2023, the VCAG partnered with the Fire Department at the library at an event titled The Circle of Fire. The room was set up with works of art showing the beauty of the Environment, then paintings and photographs of the destruction of fire, and then the aftermath of deviation and rebuilding. The Firemen were outside giving tours of Fire Engines. Judith Shadzi brought her grandchildren and an impression on 12 year old Alec. He said, "I am going to be a fireman some day."

Seven year old Sophia fell in love with and purchased a children's painting. The daytime event was open to the public, and the evening reception was by invitation only to meet the artists. Julie Strohe catered the event. Tara Shadzi Harrison came from LA and served non-alcoholic cocktails. It was attended by 50 people. Artist Judy Beyers donated two photographs to the fire station.

The VCAG has voted new officers. Laura Adolph, President of the Art Association is now also acting President of the VCAG, Zee Ryken is Secretary, Judith Shadzi is Treasurer working with CPA Delores Chavez, Barbara Scharnau is Founding member, and Gloria Warren is Co-founding member.

The Valley Center Art Gallery's mission is to encourage artistic expression by integrating arts into the community at a new gathering place for artists of all mediums and to compliment community activities and organizations by creating a well-rounded Valley Center Cultural Center. Their plan is to continue having shows and partnering with businesses and keeping in contact with the county to achieve their goal.

The VCAG Board of Directors is very grateful for the donations and ongoing support of the community at large. If you would like to donate to the building fund contact Treasurer Judith Shadzi at 760-443-6742. If you

would like to find out more about the Valley Center Art Gallery, join,
volunteer, donate art or become a board member go to their website:
valleycenterartgallery.org.