

The story behind art contest honoree

Suzanne Rosetti's death inspired annual show. Her killer was executed January 10

By KYLIE SHAFERKOETTER
Post Staff

BACK MOUNTAIN - The Suzanne Maria Rossetti Memorial Juried Annual Art Contest has become a tradition for young artists. Students in the Lake-Lehman, Dallas, Northwest and Tunkhannock school districts have entered the contest for 17 years.

But, who was Suzanne Maria Rossetti? According to her mother, Louise, she was a very vivacious young woman who cared about everybody.

But that's only part of the story behind the art contest. Eighteen years ago this month, Suzanne, then 26 years old, was kidnapped, raped, stoned to near death, buried alive and eventually murdered by two men in Phoenix, Arizona. On her way to pick up her parents, she had stopped at a convenience store for some gum when she accidentally locked her keys in her car. The store clerk said he could not leave the counter to help her. That is when Jessie James Gilles and Michael Logan offered to help. And that was the last time she was seen alive.

Rossetti was raised in Massachusetts and was living in her parents' townhouse in Phoenix while she managed a burn treatment center. She loved photography, hiking, her family and friends. The Rossetti family had no connection to the Back Mountain until a strange twist of fate occurred. Local artist Sue Hand read about Suzanne's horrific murder in TIME magazine and was deeply moved by the story.

At that time Michael Fain was transferred from Arizona



Kevin Rowland hung an entry in last year's Suzanne Maria Rossetti Memorial Juried Art Contest, under the watchful eye of a photo of the girl who inspired the annual show.

POST FILE PHOTO

"I always say God took Suzanne and gave us a wonderful family in Pennsylvania."

Louise Rossetti
Suzanne Rossetti's mother

to the Back Mountain and began jogging with Sue's husband, Joe. Fain told Joe about the loss of his good friend Suzanne. Joe told Sue, who eventually met Fain and called the Rossetti family in Massachusetts.

"I never knew Suzanne, but I was very affected by her death and the stories of her life. All the things that happened to her are everyone's nightmare," explained Hand. "I toyed with the idea of starting an art show for students. I wanted to do something upbeat and positive in Suzanne's memory."

Sue called the Rossettis within a couple months of

Suzanne's death to express her sympathy and to ask if she could name the art contest in their daughter's memory.

"It was like I had always known them. They are truly my second family," said Hand.

Louise Rossetti, Suzanne's mother, comes to the art contest every year and echoes Sue's sentiments. "We feel very honored by what Sue has done. Sue is a great talent and wonderful person. I always say God took Suzanne and gave us a wonderful family in Pennsylvania," said Rossetti.

Peter Rossetti, Suzanne's father, recently passed away. Suzanne's sister, Donna and

brother, Peter Jr. also visit the area. Mrs. Rossetti, 77, loves the Back Mountain and feels a connection with its people.

"The Back Mountain is great. Everyone is so gracious," said Rossetti, who specifically mentioned the teachers and parents of participants in the art contest. As an avid runner, Mrs. Rossetti often runs races while she is in town. She credits running as a big factor in overcoming her grief.

On Jan. 10, Jessie James Gilles was executed by lethal injection in an Arizona prison. Logan is serving life imprisonment.

The Suzanne Maria Rossetti Memorial Juried Art Contest will be held from Feb. 28 through March 31. Entry information appears on page 6. For more information call Sue Hand's Imagery at 675-5094.

Rosetti contest entries will be accepted Feb. 1-17

All area students in grades 7-12 are invited to enter the 18th Annual Suzanne Maria Rossetti Memorial Juried Art Contest. The contest is sponsored by Joe and Sue Hand of Dallas in memory of the daughter of Louise and the late Peter Rossetti of Saugus, MA. The contest is open to any 7th-12th grade student who resides in, or attends any public, private or parochial school within the school districts of Dallas, Lehman, Tunkhannock, or Northwest, or any 7th-12th grade students, who study art with any private instructor teaching within those areas.

Entries must be delivered to Sue Hand's Imagery, 35 Main Street, Dallas, between Feb. 1 and 17. They will be judged separately on each grade level in a variety of categories including pencil, pastel, watercolor, acrylic, oil, ink, scratchboard, mixed media, fibers, photography, prints and miniature drawings and paintings. Photographs must be at least 8"x10". No entry may exceed 40 inches in either direction, frame and/or mat included.

All entries must be mounted or matted, or framed (exception: works on canvas board or stretched canvas or 3-D entries), and must be accompanied by an entry form, available from school art teachers or from Sue Hand's Imagery. All matted and/or framed artwork must have a hanger on the back. Each student may submit a total of three entries.

Ribbons will be awarded in 12 different categories on each separate grade level by two panels of three judges each. In addition, many community sponsored cash awards will be assigned by a separate awards jury.

The public is invited to the Opening Reception of the 18th Annual Suzanne Maria Rossetti Memorial Juried Art Show on Sunday, Feb. 28 from 1-4 p.m. at the MacDonald Art Gallery, College Misericordia, Dallas. An awards ceremony will follow at 4 p.m. The exhibit of winning art works will continue through Wednesday, March 31.

For additional information, call Heather Madeira at 675-5094.

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