

## 'Miles of Mules' celebrates the historic and artistic wealth of Bucks County.

Across the river in Lambertville, N.J., Chalfont resident Yvonne Love's "Memory Mule" springs from a more personal inspiration, although her intention is to let others grow from their own interaction with the piece. It will be located in front of her sponsor, the In Rare Form Gallery on Bridge Street in Lambertville.

Her warm, peachy-yellow mule, studded with clear resin nubs, is a reflection of her feelings and memories of her sister, who died of leukemia when she was a child. Embedded in the resin are hairs, eggshells, needles and pins, symbolic elements that signify strength, fragility, loss, and the ability or inability to mend things. She does not expect or intend for others to take away this same interpretation or meaning, but instead hopes viewers will make connections to their personal narrative.

As a sculptor who often does site-specific work or installations, Ms. Love relishes the opportunity to take on a project that will contribute to people's daily lives.

"It was the idea that it was a community project," Ms. Love says, "that it would be seen out in the community and it would be another way to make a connection to the community that appealed to me. Most of the time my work is only seen by a small group of people. I liked the idea that it would be seen by other people, not just people from the art world, and so it was sort of a challenge to make a bridge between what I normally do and what people will take away from it."

As an arts educator, Ms. Love also believes the project is a great way to raise awareness about the arts and is a great vehicle for learning. The project has already been successful in that vein, with several school groups participating in mule decoration.

At Quarry Hill Elementary School in Yardley, students from the third, fourth and fifth grades contributed to the creation of "Quacker Jack," sponsored by the Yardley Business Association. The mule, whose location in Yardley Borough has not yet been announced, celebrates the ducks of Lake Afton and was realized through the collective efforts of the young artists.

According to Ruth Ann Schultz, art coordinator for the Pennsbury School District, the students worked on the mule, a few at a time, during regular art classes. Some painted the background, while others traced the birds and painted on the beaks and feathers.

"One of my goals," says Ms. Schultz, "was for each of them to have a little part in the creation of the mule, and that little part was important to the completion of the



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**Above: Angela Mikula and her work, "By the Light of the Silvery Mule." Below, left: "City Slicker."**

whole mule. I think that once they see it installed, they will have a real ownership of being involved in a professional art project and participating in something that will be viewed by the public."

Another mule associated with a school project is the "RU Ready: Expedition Leader," sponsored by the Russell Byers Charter School in Philadelphia. Artist Diane Keiler has been working with the school that is based on the expeditionary teaching principles of Outward Bound, a program that promotes learning through experience. The Philadelphia artist had been in-

will stand in a location in Bristol.

Both artists have used historical sources and text to communicate stories and facts about life on the canal. Ms. Pearsall gleaned her information from newspaper accounts of the area, transferred the text to fabric, and is using a papier-maché technique to outfit her mule, which is a work in progress.

Ms. Tottoroto, a Newtown resident, dove into the archives of the Canal Museum in Easton to find her stories. She transferred the text onto her mule with custom-made rubber stamps that recall 19th-century font styles. She intended to create something that was interactive and could

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Another mule associated with a school project is the "RU Ready: Expedition Leader," sponsored by the Russell Byers Charter School in Philadelphia. Artist Diane Keller has been working with the school that is based on the expeditionary teaching principles of Outward Bound, a program that promotes learning through experience. The Philadelphia artist had been involved with the school's mural tile project and carried elements of that design over to the mule, slated to stand in front of the visitors center in Washington Crossing State Park.

Based on the idea of a computer circuit board as a map, which the students use to explore and track down information, it is morphed with a layout of the canal area across the saddle. The rest of the mule is done in a trompe l'oeil style, giving it the appearance of a carousel creature.

Other creative takes on design come from Judy Pearsall, whose mule, "Newspaper 'Mule'che," will be exhibited in front of her sponsor at Intercounty Newspapers in Newtown, and Rosemary Tottoroto, whose "Mule Tales,"

will stand in a location in Bristol.

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Ms. Tottoroto, a Newtown resident, dove into the archives of the Canal Museum in Easton to find her stories. She transferred the text onto her mule with custom-made rubber stamps that recall 19th-century font styles. She intended to create something that was interactive and could communicate the facts and lore of mule-drawn barges. During research, she found immensely compelling stories, revealing tidbits of the people who walked these paths many decades ago.

"The one that struck me the most was about a woman who, when she was about 6 or 7, was a mule driver," Ms. Tottoroto says. "She said that when she got tired, she would climb up on the mule and fall asleep."

With no expectations of the hard labor the mules put in during the canal's industrious history, unlocking the imagination and provoking curiosity are the biggest burdens these beasts will have this summer.

More than 60 mules will be roaming the Delaware Valley corridor as ambassadors of community spirit and a celebration of the historic and artistic wealth of the region. In the fall, the mules will be auctioned to raise further funds and give people the opportunity to keep some of this canal-side heritage running free in their own backyards.

Miles of Mules will be on exhibit throughout the summer in various locations. For information, call the Michener Museum at (215) 340-9800. On the Web: [www.miles-of-mules.org](http://www.miles-of-mules.org)

