

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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Extension Master Naturalist Spotlight: Peggy West

Art and nature go hand-in-hand for Extension Master Naturalist and artist Peggy West. She uses her skills and expertise to educate and advocate for critical issues of the environment.

Peggy became certified through the [Morton Arboretum](#) in 2003 for Botanical Art and Illustration. She spent 16 years using her artistic skills to raise awareness of native species and advocate for environmental stewardship; and then in 2019, she completed the [Extension Master Naturalist](#) training in order to further develop her knowledge and reach.

"The Master Naturalist program adds authenticity and depth of knowledge in local flora and fauna to my art that I couldn't achieve alone. As a Master Naturalist, I benefit from a cohort of supportive colleagues, as well as endless opportunities to engage, share, advocate, and learn," stated Peggy.

One of the volunteer projects Peggy is involved in is the [Peoria Art Guild's](#) Earth Day Print project. This is the fourth year she has created and shared a special art project to honor Earth Day in April and her second year as a registered "Artist for the Earth" at [earthday.org](#).

Examples of her projects include a [Wild Peoria](#) sticker campaign (2020), a Print Co-op Postcard Exchange (2021), and this year's "Invest in Our Mother, Earth" poetry chapbook (small book) installation at the Peoria Art Guild. "Each year I attempt to extend the reach of the project to new audiences, imagining that every pebble in the pond can create a ripple we don't even see. With that in mind, I printed 40 chapbooks for the installation that were exchanged for "investments" in our planet through donations or commitment cards," Peggy noted.

"Peggy's work is very unique and interesting," commented [Christine Belless](#), U of I Extension ag and natural resources program coordinator. "She presented during our unit-wide EMN meeting this spring, where she shared the history of Earth Day and the Artists for the Earth initiative. It was also interesting to hear other EMNs reflect on their own commitments to "invest in the planet"...this year's Earth Day theme."

Other volunteer projects Peggy focuses on include [Citizen Science Great Backyard Bird Count](#), [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#) (OLLI), and trail guide at [Wildlife Prairie Park](#). Her volunteer environmental art activities include [Creative Soul Gallery](#) butterfly releases, [Rocky Glen](#) trail signs, and [Forest Park Nature Center](#) Art Show. Visit [wildpeoria.com](#) or [Instagram](#) to see more of Peggy's work.



Photo provided by Peggy West

The "Invest in Our Mother, Earth" installation at Peoria Art Guild is just one way Peggy West, Extension Master Naturalist, uses her artistic skills and knowledge of nature to educate and advocate for critical issues of the environment.

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