

Meet the September 22, 2018 WaterFire Orb Lighter:

Terry Polonsky

If you've been to an arts festival, an artists' gathering or anything supporting the community, chances are you've seen Terry Polonsky there. If you've spent anytime in downtown Sharon and witnessed the art installations, chances are you've seen Terry's work. If you've walked through WaterFire, chances are you've met Terry as one of the vendors showing his work. Terry is an artist, a photographer, an educator, a leader, a volunteer, a friend of the community and a supporter of WaterFire from its start.

A native of Western Pennsylvania, Terry mixed his love for the outdoors with his interest in drawing as he roamed his family's farm. His early experience in creating art was just that – with the great outdoors as his inspiration. He graduated with a degree in Art Education and while studying for that degree, took up photography. After graduating he has spent his professional career in graphic design and marketing. Terry has created award winning retail and commercial design projects.

Throughout the years he has taught at Youngstown State and shared his expertise with students in Graphic Design and Advertising. Terry's work has been accepted in several regional juried shows at the Hoyt Center, the Valley Art Center's Unaltered Photography Show, the Trumbull Art Gallery, and the Butler Institute of American Arts. His work is on display at several additional galleries throughout the region.

Terry doesn't stop with creating and teaching art – he works tirelessly to promote art and other artists as well. In addition to serving as Chairman of the Arts Commission for the City of Sharon, he is also a Teaching Artist in the "Arts in Education Program" with Erie Arts & Culture. Terry has been the grantee of several awards from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, PPA Stream Project from which he has created public art installations and learning opportunities for fellow artists. He has also been a supporter of WaterFire since it came to town, both in showing his own work and in helping to create programming and points of interest for WaterFire visitors and guests.

Currently, Terry serves as the President of Random Acts of Artists whose mission statement reads: "Dedicated to promoting the arts, nurturing the artists and serving the community through open communication and cooperation". A visitor to Sharon is sure to come across just some of the magnificent work this group has created under Terry's leadership. Starting at the community library where you'll find a garden of beautifully painted posts each depicted a different novel, its just a short walk to the alley in the 100 block of East State Street where you'll find a collection of 26 large portraits decorating the once bare brick alley walls. The pieces are placed strategically so that the viewer is at the eye level of the portrait – where an "interface" can occur – hence the projects name "Random Interface". Their work can also be seen in many places in Sharon: Buhl Park where you'll find their beautifully created Dream Pods, the Gallery Garden in River Garden Park, colorful flags along Connelly Boulevard, several installations on State Street near Reyer's Shoe Store, and most recently, a mural along Connelly Blvd of Silhouettes. Under Terry's leadership the group hosts regular classes for all level of artists, including FLOW (Flor the Love of Writing) and FLOP (For the Love of Photography). They also house a theater group called "Black Sheep Players" that performs several productions throughout the year. Be sure to check out the Artist Trail they've created through downtown Sharon for everyone to experience. Maps are available throughout town, posted on the lampposts. Don't miss their own gallery located in Penn State's Cravings, on Shenango Avenue in downtown Sharon too!

Random Acts of Artists (RAA) is a very welcoming, inviting group that anyone with an interest in art is welcome to participate in. No degree or experience is required to be part of RAA. Just a genuine interest to support or pursue the arts is all that's needed. "Every day, people pass by so many wonderful sights. Sometimes it takes the eye of an artist to discover, or make art from even the most common things around us. Art can be found, made or imagined. The artist is the common element in all forms of art", Terry so beautifully stated.

Terry, on behalf of everyone visiting WaterFire today and Sharon every day, we want you to know what a difference you have made in the entire area! Not only have you shared your own talent, you've pursued and received grants that allowed many artists to get involved. With their involvement and under your leadership, you have "painted the town" to be colorful, intriguing and more than special. Things that all of us can enjoy, and be especially proud of when visitors come and see what amazing beautiful work is on display for them to enjoy too!

We thank you for your dedication, for your support, for your heart for volunteerism and for sharing your extraordinary talents with all of us. Our area simply would NOT be the same without you!

WaterFire Sharon is Honored to have Terry Polonsky light the Orb tonight!

