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ULSTER EDITION

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Award-winning artist spawns programs in Ulster

By Bryan Virasami
Poughkeepsie Journal

HIGHLAND — Elisa Pritzker discovered the magic of paint as well as her creative spirit when she was 8.

"In my house, the environment was kind of artistic," said Pritzker, 43, about her childhood in Argentina. "I still remember the things I did there because it was very powerful for me."

The artist and independent curator said she first appreciated art as a child. And with her parents' strong support, she pursued it in Argentina, in Spain and now in Highland, where she and her husband co-founded the Highland Cultural Center five years ago.

Her works have been displayed across the mid-Hudson

region, in New York City, across the United States and in foreign countries, including Germany and Taiwan.

But for Pritzker, art is more than creating, and at the center in Highland, her work goes beyond her paint brush.

She is known for reaching out to students and young artists and bringing classes and workshops to the area, which was previously not an area known for its arts.

Pritzker coordinates an annual program sponsored by the Highland school district. It allows students to create works of art toward the end of the school year. The products are displayed in the center's gallery and the students receive certificates.

In addition, the not-for-profit

center provides artists a chance to expose their work in the gallery through various programs. It also provides space for several community organizations, such as the local Sierra Club, to meet.

"I think that when you give, you receive back. It's nice to be among people," she said. "If you see that others are happy you receive happiness back."

Her creations have continuously been in demand.

"@maya" was a solo exhibition of her works on display through Oct. 1 at a Manhattan gallery. In addition, she recently ended a solo exhibit and curated a group of six American artists in Italy.

She has received numerous awards and honors, including a certificate of special con-

gressional recognition in 1998 for "outstanding and invaluable service." She also received the J.C. Penney Golden Rule Award.

Highlights of her 25 years in the arts can be seen in a file preserved at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington.

A cultural pioneer

"She's like a pioneer in the cultural scene. She was desperately needed in our town," said Town of Lloyd Supervisor Ray Costantino, who met Pritzker five years ago.

He said Pritzker's devotion to the student program "Highland, My Hometown," and exposing others to art and music with annual festivals and programs, have been welcomed.

"It's one of those quality-of-life things that make the world go around," he said. "It's nice to have an internationally renowned artist in our town."

In Argentina, Pritzker worked in a museum where she developed a program for children to explore art. But she was careful back then, as now, to make art a fun and rewarding experience.

"The kids go to the museum and play instead of feeling they have to go to the museum and look in silence," she said.

After she pursued a dream and moved to Spain to explore art history, she moved to Highland seven years later, where got married. She plans to stay.

"The quality of life is good here. I have good friends and good neighbors," she said.

NEIGHBOR

ELISA PRITZKER

Age: 43
Family: Husband, Rob Lunski; daughter, Jimena, 12.
Home: Highland.
Education:

Studies in theater direction, body expression, acting, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 1983; BA in ceramics art, Mar del Plata, 1976.
Hobbies: music, theater and art-related movies.



Neighbor appears each Monday. To suggest a candidate, call 437-4833.