

Plainfield library showcasing talented trio of amateur photographers



Written by

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PLAINFIELD — A trio of talented local photographers has had a partial monopoly on the awards doled out during the Plainfield Public Library's last several annual photography contests.

So the library did the only logical thing — it gave them their own exhibit.

The Park Avenue facility's first Summer Invitational Photography Exhibition is on display now through the end of September, featuring a dozen images apiece by multiple award-winners William Monroe, Jackie Schnoop and Paul LeGrand.

"At the last contest, I told Bill, 'I am going to take that first place away from you next year,'" Schnoop jokingly recalled — alluding to the fact that Monroe has earned first-place honors in each of the last three contests.

In 2008 it was "Weiner Man," a shot of a lonely short-order cook working late hours at Texas Weiner on Watchung Avenue, that captured a blue ribbon. In 2009 it was a breathtaking photo of the entrance to the Shakespeare Garden in Plainfield's Cedar Brook Park. And in 2010, when the contest's awards were separated by pictures shot on the city's east and west sides, Monroe struck gold twice: once with a panorama of Green Brook Park in a snowstorm and again with a shot of a mischievous squirrel raiding a backyard bird feeder.

"I've been interested in photography ever since my teens, but never got active in it until the 1980s. I worked for a construction company and it was a great source of photos, not only to record what we built, but also the antics of the guys on the crews," Monroe explained. "My favorite is probably my first entry ever, and that was a photo taken on Christmas evening 2001 of the Netherwood train station in the snow. I had no confidence, but my wife Sue convinced me to enter — and lo and

behold, I won!”

Monroe said he typically uses a Panasonic DMC-FZ50 with a powerful zoom lens or a Canon Rebel D. Schnoop said she uses a Canon SX120 PowerShot and a pair of “lesser cameras” that collectively landed her second-place contest honors in 2009 and again in 2010 — both times for atmospheric shots of Plainfield’s downtown train station in inclement weather.

Schnoop, who once worked as a television blogger for AOL and now pens an entertainment-based blog of her own making, said she took a semester-long high school photography course in 1970 but only took it up as a regular hobby in 2003.

“All of a sudden I could take pictures and not worry about the cost of developing them,” Schnoop said about the advent of commercially available digital photography. “I even sold a few.”

“The transition to digital was difficult, but worth it,” Monroe added. “I’m an old geezer, and computers were a mystery to me ... we didn’t have them in school. Now that I’m comfortable with computers, it’s a lot of fun, and instant gratification to be able to print out your work at home.”

LeGrand took home multiple contest awards in 2007 and again in 2008, most recently for a shot of colorful neon signs wedged between the Corinthian columns of a historic building in downtown Plainfield. But most of the images on display through

September were not contest submissions and have not been exhibited before; the subjects cover a wide range of cityscapes, landscapes, floral studies and urban portraits.

The library's sixth annual photography contest will be open for submissions in August, with entrants featured in an exhibit to open in November and run through December. The theme this year is “Plainfield On The Go;” for more information, contact Jeff Wassen at 908-757-1111, Ext. 136.

