

## *Preserving our heritage - Peconic Land Trust*

By NATALIE WEINSTEIN, ALLIED MEMBER ASID

**T**he Peconic Land Trust established in 1983 by John Halsey, whose family dates back 300 years to this area, is part of the fastest growing conservation movement in the United States. Land trusts have been responsible for the preservation of over two million acres of land from the East Coast to the West Coast. The Peconic Land Trust, part of a national organization, (The Land Trust Alliance) protects open space and farm land by working with the government, creating easements, leases, exchanges, as well as gifting and purchasing programs. By promoting voluntary land conservation through tax incentives and other methods, they protect our natural resources as well as scenic views. Farmers can continue to farm, the uniqueness and beauty of the land are preserved, tourism, recreational activities and second home buying flourishes. The conservation program also focuses on the protection of wild life habitat, migration routes and particularly bodies of water such as creeks and ponds.

Rebecca Chapman, a vice president, is one of the Trust's team of professionals with expertise in open space and farmland preservation. There is a board of directors experienced in finance, farming, business, real estate and management, repre-



*Natalie Weinstein, president of Natalie Weinstein Design Associates and Natalie Weinstein Decorating Club is host of the Home Show with Natalie Weinstein, Thursdays @ 7:00p.m. on WLIE, 540 A.M.*

sentative of eastern Long Island's communities, as well as committees and stewardship volunteers.

A few years ago she approached Gordon Matheson, a talented and community minded artist to help her create the art portion of a fundraiser that would marry the visual arts, especially landscape painting and photography with the land. The result was a "Farms & Fields" event with farm machine demonstrations, a petting zoo, wine and cheese tastings, a tour of local farms and businesses, as well as an art exhibit, farmscapes, featuring local artists whose works

focus on the land.

This year's event on Saturday, August 6, from 10-5 will be located in the town of Wainscott, between the villages of Bridgehampton and East Hampton, which has some of the most spectacular views of land and sea on Long Island. The art show will be housed in Wainscott Chapel opposite scenic Wainscott Pond. Wainscott also boasts one of the oldest still operating one room school houses (the other is in Sagaponack) as well as being one of the oldest English settlements on Long Island.

Gordon Matheson, an "en plein aire" artist, (his studio is the outdoors) paints local ponds, bays, barns and fields in acrylics. He works with the Trust because he has experienced the beauty of the land and its fragility when not protected, witnessing first hand bulldozers knocking down barns, even as he was painting them. His connection with local artists, such as Eileen Dawn Skretch, Casey Anderson and photographer Tom Steele have helped him create important shows that would be worth viewing even if they weren't put together as fundraisers. More of Gordon's work can be seen at [www.gordonmathesonstudio.com](http://www.gordonmathesonstudio.com)

Eileen Skretch was born into a Southampton farming family and grew up loving the land,

its' sights, smells and abundance. Using oil as her medium, she, too, paints "en plein aire" as well as in her studio, with larger works from photos and studies on birch veneered plywood. "Landscapes are the perfect melding of my heritage and work. I am drawn to open sweeping scenes although I also do smaller nature studies," she reveals. See Eileen's new website at [www.eileendawnskretch.com](http://www.eileendawnskretch.com)

Tom Steele's photographic landscapes capture the beauty of the East End. His landscapes, up to seven feet in width, are a testament to the move towards open space preservation. Tom has partnered with Gordon in producing exhibitions of landscape artists, often for the benefit of the Trust. Says Tom "The synergy between the landscape artists and the Trust's mission is a natural fit. We have a good life out here and it's a good opportunity to give back through our art." More of his work can be seen at [www.TomSteeleStudio.com](http://www.TomSteeleStudio.com)

Mark the date - Saturday, August 6, for a unique and special experience, "Farm & Fields." For information regarding the Benefit Exhibit at Asawagh Hall in East Hampton on Columbus Day weekend, log on to [www.peconiclandtrust.org](http://www.peconiclandtrust.org) or call 631-283-3195. ■



*By Gordon Matheson*



*By Eileen Skretch*

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*By Tom Steele*