

STERLING

Open Studio to generate funds for cancer center

By DANIELLE RAY

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For those wanting to do some holiday shopping for unique and one-of-a-kind gifts while supporting local artists as well for a good cause, look no further than the Sterling Open Studio on Saturday, Nov. 19, and Sunday, Nov. 20.

Glass artist Lex Thomas is hosting this second annual event at her 109B Kendall Hill Road home, with five percent of the proceeds being donated to the UMass Memorial Cancer Center of Excellence Comprehensive Breast Center in Worcester.

Her first open house last December was a huge success, Thomas said, and the idea came about after visiting a number of artists in their own studio environment (her home is her studio).

"I fell in love with the idea," Thomas said of meeting artists face to face in a relaxed setting. "It personalizes the experience much more so than a retail store, where you rarely meet those that produce the things that are for sale."

Thomas said she loves the social side of the open studio the most, and really enjoys opening her



Lex Thomas is one of the featured artists at the upcoming Sterling Open Studio event.

Danielle Ray photo

home for people to experience that.

"Most artists and artisans spend hours each day working alone. It's a work life that's both intense and solitary," she said. "The Open Studio brings us into face-to-face contact with people who genuinely appreciate the work we produce. It also gives the artists a chance to connect, share information and resources, and build supportive networks among ourselves."

Five local artists will be featured at the event:

Thomas paints everything from custom designed windows and panels, to martini glasses and espresso cups, and ceramic serving pieces. She also does glass pet portraits and sun catchers. Thomas' exquisite attention to detail makes her pieces come alive with bold techniques and a rich color spectrum.

MaryAnn Piantedosi is a watercolor artist in the Oriental brush painting tradition. "She skillfully combines a tremendous sense of form and color into beautiful paintings of landscapes, flowers, and wildlife," said Thomas of her artist peer who was also featured at last year's open house.

Photographer Doug Hockman "has an intuitive eye that captures the unique beauty of nature. His nature shots, abstracts and still life images encompass the emotions and beauty we all experience on viewing everyday life," praised Thomas.

Christopher Meagher is a traditional decorative painter. Over the past 25 years "he has developed a comprehensive skill set ranging from fundamental interior and exterior house painting and restoration finishes to subtle and sophisticated high-end decorative techniques, including a wide range of furniture and kitchen cabinet finishes, wall glazing and faux finishes, metallic and leaf finishes and even genuine hand-troweled Venetian



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plasters," Thomas said.

Steve Koleshis is the newest addition to the open studio circle – the Sterling-based artist sculpts with recycled and repurposed metal. "Where I see a rusty old lawnmower or a broken shovel, he sees parts that he turns into all manner of wonders," marveled Thomas of his work.

The UMass Breast Center was chosen as the benefactor because Thomas said in the past few years, she has know over a dozen women who have been treated for breast cancer, some family members, so it's an issue that hits close to home.

"Several have been treated at UMass Memorial, and this is a way of saying 'thank you' for all their work and dedication," said Thomas. "It's also important to me that it supports a local facility, and that I can donate proceeds from the work I love to an institution

that means so much to so many."

Thomas said she would love this year to be as successful as last year's open studio, and continue to grow in years to come.

"An open studio is an ideal opportunity for artists and craftspeople and members of the public that appreciate art and handmade crafts to mingle in an intimate and friendly environment. It also lets people know about wonderful arts and crafts that are produced right in their own communities, and to support a local enterprise.

"Although there are plenty of items for sale, we're also happy for people to just drop by for a visit and view our work," she said.

Refreshments will be served, and a roaring fire will be tended for guests to sit by and chat. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Thomas hopes to add a spring event in 2012.

For more information and directions, visit lexieglass.com, call 978-870-5757, or find Sterling Open Studio on Facebook.