



Painting by Thomas Locker

When we moved to Mellenville in 2008, we walked into the Philmont Library – because one of the first things I do when I move somewhere is to go to my local library – and the first thing I noticed was that there was a real, actual painting behind the desk. It was a really good painting. I wondered why the library would have a really nice painting like that, so I asked.

I found out that it was by the painter, Thomas Locker, who illustrated Hudson Valley children's books. I asked Karen Garafalo, the library director, about it. She answered me with a story. She told me how Thomas Locker almost died – well, he actually did die - and was brought back to life in the hospital. When he recovered, he said, "I want to give back. I want to invite every Hudson Valley librarian to my studio to choose a painting."

So he did just what he said. And I don't know if anybody knows that this incredible Thomas Locker collection exists. I haven't gone to see them all, but they must be around because a bunch of librarians came to his studio.

One day, I talked to Karen and said, "I love this new community room you built. I love this library. I would love to curate shows here in the library using area artists." Karen said, "Oh yeah, sure, go for it!"

The first show we did was Thomas Locker. I got to go to his studio and meet him. I met his wife, Candace, too. It was a wonderful experience meeting them and having his show here in Philmont.

After that, my husband Tom and I curated other local artists. It was really nice. People would dress up and come to the openings. We also did some artists' talks. We curated a children's art

show too. A woman named Sarah, who made handmade books, did a fun workshop with local children. I was really grateful that Karen was open to all this.

I curated shows for about a year and a half, until I got too busy and had to stop. It was a great way to meet new people in the community that I wouldn't have met otherwise. And in looking around the library community room even now, I'm so happy to see that there's still art on the walls!

By Ruth Adams