

## 2016 CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AWARD

### Andrea Lekberg/ The Artist Baker

Bringing her Oglala Sioux heritage from the plains of South Dakota to Morristown, New Jersey, Andrea Lekberg combines her skills as a fine artist and outstanding pastry chef with a special facility in fostering the arts in her community. Trained in fine art/painting at the Art Institute of Chicago and at the pastry school of the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, Lekberg honed her cooking skills at the Coyote Café in New Mexico and at The Magnolia Grill in North Carolina before coming to the tristate area. A fan of locally sourced food, she studied with pastry chef Biagio Settepani at the French Pastry School in Chicago and worked at Sweet Melissa's Patisserie in Brooklyn before opening The Artist Baker in 2009. In 2014, she also joined forces with fellow pastry chef Erica Leahy at Jockey Hollow Bar & Kitchen at the Vail Mansion.

That said, Lekberg's career in the food business hasn't blunted her commitment to the arts. Over the past summer, she used the courtyard at The Artist Baker to host a "Backyard Ceramic Atelier," or working outdoor ceramic studio, for artists and amateurs alike to get their hands dirty. The pottery workshop taught participants the basics of the craft through hands-on demonstrations. All were welcome to come and see local potters working and learn about the process. As Robert Paniconi of *NJ Advance Media* reported, Lekberg was actively promoting "an outlet for local artists to get started." Lekberg said, "This is just the start for us...I'm interested in cultivating and fostering local artists who are trying to get started." She said she held the workshop because "I got tired of

talking with all these frustrated artists who would talk and talk about their craft but wouldn't do much of it. I decided I wanted to give them a space and an opportunity to get down to doing." Francine Epstein, an experienced potter led the workshop. "The goal," Lekberg continued, "is to get young artists in the door, help grow Morristown's culture, but also to connect artists to their audience to help them be valued." The weeklong workshop concluded with a locally sourced meal and guests received a cup and plate made by artists during the workshop. Since then, Lekberg's Artist Baker has become, in effect, an informal gathering place for artists to regularly meet and exchange ideas. Of course, Lekberg is also working on her own art - a project about her Native American heritage.

The National Endowment for the Arts notes that "creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired." Lekberg's work embodies that concept fully.

Therefore, because of her ability to blend her skills as a businesswoman, her knowledge as an artist, her talents as an exceptional pastry chef and her desire to foster a community of artists, Morris Arts is delighted to award its 2015 Creative Placemaking Award to Andrea Lekberg and her shop, The Artist Baker.

Will Andrea please come up to receive the award? March 30, 2016.