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Ranger Betty Documentary

- East Bay Fund for Artists at the East Bay Community Foundation

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of any value are welcome! There are many ways individuals, corporations, and foundations can give to Rosie the Riveter Trust. Your tax-deductible gift of stock can provide tax benefits to you, while supporting a specific program or the Trust’s Annual Fund. Your generosity makes our ongoing work in the community possible. For more information call 510-507-2270 or email mmather@rosietheriveter.org.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ranger Betty’s Legacy

A s many of you know, the Trust is working with filmmakers to make a documentary film about Ranger Betty Reid Soskin’s impact on audiences from from all parts of the country. As a legendary storyteller, Betty has changed and enriched the way history is presented at many national parks. Her moving presentations highlight the changing times, dedication, and the progress made by all Americans, of all ethnicities, and provide an authentic personal view of the struggles and progress made by African Americans in particular. Last fall we were able to host a small preview screening of footage showing Betty at award ceremonies, giving inspirational speeches, and delivering the deeply cherished moment in 2015 as she introduced then-President Barack Obama at the National Tree Lighting ceremony.

We are happy to report that we achieved our July matching challenge from East Bay Fund for Artists. Thanks to our wonderful donors, we are on our way toward our film’s completion, although we are still seeking approximately $60,000 in additional funding to complete the film and make it available to audiences and schools. Best of all, the Trust and filmmakers are also collaborating closely to produce a complementary film about Betty’s early life. Both films have anticipated completion dates of early 2018. Once finished, they will provide a full portrait of an important, and in her own unique way – influential – American figure.

—Marsha Mather-Thrift

Dorothea Lange: ‘Rosie’ of Home Front Photography

The Oakland Museum’s recent exhibition Dorothea Lange: The Politics of Seeing, served as a forceful reminder of how one woman with a Rolleiflex camera was able to help shape future generations’ understanding and “memory” of one of the nation’s most heroic and socially disruptive chapters, the era of the World War II Home Front.

Nowhere is that more true than right here on the front lines of that home front, in Richmond, the Kaiser shipyards and the Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park – as well as the home front “island” of the Manzanar Japanese-American incarceration camp in the Owens Valley – where Lange (1895-1965) and her camera served throughout the war.

Lange was a widely admired photographer before the war, known internationally for her heart-wrenching photos of 1930s Dust Bowl migrants. Her 1936 photo, known as “Migrant Mother,” became the iconic image of the Great Depression. While that image was central to the exhibit, it was the many images of wartime Kaiser shipyard workers, of downtown Richmond streets and shops thronged with a diverse mix of workers, as well as images of Japanese-Americans facing forced imprisonment that sparked the greatest interest.

Photo: San Francisco, Calif., Dorothea Lange, April 1942. - Children of the Weill public school. Some of them are evacuees of Japanese ancestry who will be housed in War relocation authority centers. c/o Library of Congress

Rosie’s Girls: A Recipe for Building Stronger Girls

Imagine 30 girls climbing out of a hole in some rocks, one after another, covered with dirt, and smiling ecstatically as they wedge feet and knees into crevices, lifting themselves up into the sunlight.

Imagine them splashing in the cold Merced River snow-melt, playing tag, or heading out on a trail bordered by wildflowers to take in spectacular cliffs and waterfalls. Most, if not all of these girls, have never been to Yosemite, and rarely had a vacation in a national park.

Picture these same girls in coveralls splashed with paint and glue, hammering, nailing, guiding welding guns and torches, joining pieces of metal, and cutting wood to shape with various power saws.

These are our 2017 Rosie’s Girls – girls entering 6th through 8th grade – who are learning to envision themselves as strong, confident, hands-on young women at an important transition-point, just before they enter high school.

Once again, the Trust and National Park worked together, along with the YMCA of the East Bay, to produce a unique and unforgettable camp for girls from low-income families in the Richmond area. On the first day, each girl met actual WWII-era Rosies, now in their 80’s and 90’s, to hear how they broke into a “man’s world” taking on unusual jobs when they were very young women. Each day the girls attended core confidence-building sessions and carpentry workshops as well as seminars where they learned computer coding and produced their own video games aimed at challenging stereotypes about girls.

Six former Rosie’s Girls also returned to work as mentors. While supporting the new girls in camp, they helped supervise field trips that included a trip to Alcatraz, a chance to meet scientists and tradeswomen at Chevron, and a financial literacy workshop. As one camper put it, “Rosie’s girls taught me to be powerful and to be courageous, and to learn new things.” Now, that is even BETTER than smashing stereotypes by getting covered with dirt!

Photos: Rosie’s Girls 2017
other Rosie Rally is under our belt, and although we did not break our own record (still standing at 2,229), we had a great time celebrating the legacy of the Rosies and all they represent. Whether we call it personal empowerment and perseverance or just think of it as the idea that ordinary people stepped up to do an extraordinary job, the work done by a diverse array of home front workers proved that “We Can Do It!” We know that the group in Michigan will be trying to break our record soon, but we are confident in the years to come that the people in the Bay Area will show up every August to prove that Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park is the place where the record belongs. Who knows, maybe one year we can do our events on the same day, and set a new joint two-state record for the most people dressed as Rosie the Riveter! We thank you for your past support and hope that you will continue to support the efforts of the Park and the Trust as you have over the last 17 years. Looking forward to seeing you next year at the Home Front Festival and Rosie Rally – I’ll be the one not dressed as a Rosie.

— Tom Leatherman