

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT JEFFERSON COUNTY



Judy Gelwicks carved and painted the lady's face early on in the project. Neighbors, friends, and family members added pieces of jewelry to the sculpture over time. *Leader photo by James Sloan*

## The Lady of the Loop: Cape George's latest icon

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She goes by many names: Queen of Repurposing, Champion of Recycling, Goddess of Love, and more.

But she's known as the Lady of the Loop to residents of Quinault Loop in Cape George, the place where she calls home.

Neighbors Judy Gelwicks, Carl Berger, Sarah Heiner, Mary Rothschild, and many others teamed up over the past year to create a detailed and well-decorated driftwood sculpture that slowly evolved to become the Lady of the Loop.

An 8-foot tall piece of Alaskan cedar driftwood adorned from head to toe with various pieces of jewelry, the sculpture stands out to anyone driving through Quinault Loop. The gold-and-pink sculpture, with an unmistakable face in the center, has become an icon for neighbors, friends, and family involved in the project. Many loop residents, or "loopers" as they call themselves, have contributed big or small to bring the sculpture to its current grandeur.

"She looks best in the morning when the sun shines off the gilt ... like a wooden Mona Lisa," said neighbor Sarah Heiner.

Although many helped out and added to the artwork over time, the key architect of the creation was Gelwicks. She received the piece of driftwood two years ago, but only in the past year has developed the piece and adorned it with jewelry, ornaments, and other decorations.

"All my life I dabbled in art," Gelwicks



Carl Berger (left) and Judy Gelwicks (right) pose in front of the Lady of the Loop. Gelwicks was the main visionary behind the project, while Berger made the concrete foundation to support the sculpture. *Leader photo by James Sloan*

said. "I like creating things. I'm retired, so creativity is my job now."

One of the first parts that Gelwicks added to the sculpture was the face, painted in the center.

After some time of shaping and decorating the piece, Gelwicks discovered the sculpture's personality as divine feminine;

encompassing feminine energy, environmentalism, and community connection.

And that's how the piece earned its name, The Lady of the Loop.

"She's very friendly. She's kind of a cross between Demeter and Aphrodite," Gelwicks said.

Gelwicks added many pieces of jewelry to

the sculpture from around the house, shopping around garage sales and repurposing stores, and receiving jewelry from friends and neighbors to add to the project.

After bejeweling her creation, Gelwicks needed a way to keep the sculpture upright and on a proper platform. Neighbor Carl Berger added a concrete base, using around 18 bags of concrete to keep the sculpture in place, and Gelwicks added gems to the foundation, as well.

"We had to put pieces of rebar in each leg," Berger recalled, to keep the lady secured.

Gelwicks received assistance from 20 or so people on the project, with additional decorations coming one by one.

"The idea was to get all the loopers to help out," Gelwicks said.

The Lady of the Loop has decorations on almost every inch of its body and has become something of a sparkling sensation.

"It does give life to our street," Rothschild added.

What some may see as an eccentric homemade wood sculpture, loopers see as a beacon of community, environmentalism, and repurposing. With the amount of help from community members, materials repurposed from others, and joyful impact on all involved in the project, it's no wonder the sculpture has so many different names.

Although the lady is nearly complete, Gelwicks and others hope to add to the artwork over time, maintaining the sculpture as a beloved symbol of the looper community.

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