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*Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991, is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.*

**Mission:** Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Friends and Family everywhere  
From: Cheri and Raven Hill  
Date: January 15, 2022  
Re: Prehistoric plants today!

Greetings, Everyone!

**Jurassic Park** is a favorite outdoor exhibit at Raven Hill. The walkway illustrates the geologic history of the Earth from the time our solar system formed through modern man. There are real rocks, fossils and trees, as well as sculptures of extinct species. The exhibit opened in 2004, then expanded in 2007 and once again in 2011.

Truth be known, **Jurassic Park** actually began in 1997 as an indoor display of local artists' works, portraying various aspects of prehistoric times. It was a challenge, in some cases, to convince artists to "think outside the box" and create art beyond their comfort zone. It took over a year to convince watercolorist, Jan Glass, to paint four amazing paintings of prehistoric plants and insects. When the paintings were complete, she wrote the following letter, which I am sharing here in its entirety:



*Magnolias still exist and look remarkably similar to their fossilized ancestors from 100 million years. Next spring, take a walk along Raven Hill's Jurassic Park pathway and compare the living and fossilized magnolia leaves for yourself.*



*One of the four watercolors painted by local artist, Jan Glass, shows a magnolia, one of our oldest flowering trees. Be sure to see all four paintings next time you visit Raven Hill.*

"I did not realize that the opportunity Cheri offered me, when she asked me to develop a series of paintings on prehistoric plants and insects, would have such an impact on my life. I had been caring for my mother for several months before her death and had not done any painting during that period. Cheri's request came at a time, when I was emotionally and creatively at a low ebb. The challenges and timeframe seemed overwhelming and yet I knew that it was a challenge I wanted to accept. The first three attempts to depict early life were artistic disasters! I could not seem to draw any life into the work. Plus, I realized that my knowledge of the subject matter was extremely limited. The research process began in earnest and the more I read, the more I realized I had a lot to learn. The learning process introduced me to a whole new world of discovery, new friends and became the healing process I needed.

To escape the cold winter of northern Michigan, my husband and I headed to New Mexico and Arizona. There I found myself in the midst of ancient history. I marveled at the fossils of the “scale” trees, insects captured in liquid amber, fossils of dragonfly wings, leaves and flowers. I met, and learned from, a geologist while wandering through the petrified forest, talked to a photographer who worked for a natural science magazine, discussed art challenges with other artists and received helpful information from national park guides. I spent hours digging through old botany and entomology books. The light went on and I was hooked. I followed million-year-old plants to their present day evolvement. I rediscovered the glory of God’s creation and the evolutionary plan for continued life on earth. Not only did I become enthralled with the subject matter for the pictures I created for this project, I also found a link to my own existence. God’s hand has been forever present. I hope that the works I have created will spark a desire for young people to learn more about our yesterdays, so that they will better understand all of our tomorrows.” –Jan Glass



*Front and left is a dried protea blossom and behind is the artistic interpretation created by Ed Fralik.*

Like the magnolia, protea is another prehistoric flower, which still exists. An intact fossil was discovered a few years ago in China and has been dated to 125 million years ago. Ed Fralik, local metal artist, replicated a “protea” in metal for Raven Hill’s indoor exhibit.



*Protea are my favorite flower as Upsy Daisy Floral in Boyne City knows! If she has any, Sidney makes this exotic flower the focal point of the arrangements that I order!*

Regular weekend hours continue. During the winter, we are open noon to 4pm on Saturdays and 2pm to 4pm on Sundays, plus other times by appointment. To make reservations, email [info@miravenhill.org](mailto:info@miravenhill.org) or call 231.536.3369. Both the Smithsonian **Labor Days: History of Work** exhibit and a related Logging display remain on display during regular hours or by appointment.

**Once again**, for the sake of the vaccinated and the unvaccinated, we are asking visitors to mask correctly indoors—covering nose and mouth. Also, since the coronavirus seems to be surging lately, we are encouraging people to wear a good quality mask or double mask. We have surgical masks available for purchase. If you or anyone in your group is feeling sick, please reschedule your visit. Stay safe and take care of yourselves.

Cheri

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