



PHILMONT BEAUTIFICATION, INC.

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opening Reception Date: October 6th, 2011

Place: Philmont Beautification Inc Resource Center, 113 Main St., Philmont, NY (Main & Summit St)

Opening Reception Time: 6pm-8pm

Exhibition runs October 6th to November 18th, 2011

Exhibition Hours: Wed thru Fri 10am -6pm, Saturday 10am – 2pm

"30 Years of Tim Smith Stonemasonry in Columbia County" a photography exhibition by Steve Benson, will show an assemblage of photographic prints from a collection of over 1500 images taken during a twelve-month collaboration between a fine art photographer and a stonemason who live and work in Philmont. Benson's photographs capture the majestic beauty of stone in the landscape and the intimacy of masons working together to create magnificent stoneworks and historic preservation restorations across Columbia County.

After 30 years teaching middle school, Steve Benson is now a published writer and photographer living and working in Philmont with his wife Faith. Benson has co-authored with Ron Toelke publications including *Thomas Jefferson and Monticello*, *Discover Dutch New Netherland*, and *Waterways of War: The Struggle for Empire 1754-1763*, a guidebook to the French and Indian War in upstate New York and western Pennsylvania. Benson has also contributed photographs to Bob Toole's history of landscape gardening in the Hudson Valley.

Tim Smith, principal of TD Smith Stonemasonry in Philmont, learned his craft at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City as a member of the Cathedral Apprentice program. Smith learned his craft under the hard-driving British Master builders James Bambridge, Alan Bird & Steven Boyle who ran the well known restoration program which successfully trained disadvantaged youth from Harlem as stone cutters involved in the restoration of the Cathedral in the early 80's. Smith drew on his experiences on the Cathedral Apprentice team when he and his wife Laura moved to Philmont, set up business, and started to employ "at risk" Philmont youth who were struggling with formal public school education. Instead, under Smith's tutelage, they learned the needed lessons of life through stonework. During his 30 years of living and working in Columbia County, Smith has successfully trained dozens of local youth in the lost art of handmade stonework. Many have then gone on to establish their own businesses as certified journeymen and masons. Recent TD Smith Stonemasonry projects include the restoration of the General Worth House on Union Street in Hudson, the restoration of the Clock Tower in Chatham, and the co-founding of the Agawamuck Project for the Fine and Practical Arts. Located at Operation Unite in Hudson, the Project engages and trains at-risk youths in the art and craft of traditional trades.

"30 Years of Tim Smith Stonemasonry in Columbia County" is the inaugural arts & trades exhibition program developed by Philmont Beautification, Inc. The exhibitions will explore the interconnections of Philmont's artists, trades, and home-based businesses which play a key role in the restoration and revitalization of Philmont's Main St. The exhibition program is funded in part by the Fund for Columbia County at the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.

Local 111 farm-to-table restaurant located at 111 Main St. will be serving a prix fixe \$15 buffet dinner to coincide with the exhibition opening.

PB Inc is organized as a grass-roots nonprofit 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization initiating programs which contribute to the general quality of community life through Main St. revitalization renovation projects, The Philmont Farmers' Market, improved affordable housing, small business assistance, and through community arts. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to support a program of your choice. Philmont Beautification, Inc. is a registered public charity at the NYS Charities Bureau and a member of GuideStar. Annual reporting can be requested from both agencies.