

# Rocky Mountain Quilt Festival

## The 2009 Hoffman Challenge Winners & Traveling Collection Premiered in their Entirety

By **KELLY GALLAGHER-ABBOTT**

The second annual Rocky Mountain Quilt Festival was a wild success! Over 600 items were displayed in this August show and thousands enjoyed viewing the textile art, traveling Hoffman Challenge collection, and shopping from vendors from around the country. At a time when some shows are experiencing decreased attendance, fewer vendors, and diminishing numbers of entries, the team that puts on this show has even more reason to celebrate. The story behind this show demonstrates the power of innovative ideas, open minds, collaboration, and a leap of faith!

In late 2007, several of us formed a new guild in northern Colorado. I offered to allow the guild the opportunity to do a first time ever display of the entire Hoffman Challenge traveling exhibit as a fundraiser. After jurying and award judging takes place for the Hoffman Challenge early each August, about 350 items are selected for travel in one of 12 collections shipped to various exhibitions throughout the U.S. and Canada starting the first of September. It is rare for any single show to display more than one or two of these collections, so displaying all 12 trunks before they began traveling created a visual treat, and we felt it would have a great draw.

We began working on putting together a show for August, which is a huge undertaking for an established guild, but it proved too overwhelming for a brand new



*The First Place Viewer's Choice Award was given to Sherry Reynolds of Laramie, WY, for her quilt "Reynolds Crossing."*

guild. A few months before the scheduled display some members of the guild became concerned about the financial risk and opted to cancel the show.

This was very disturbing to some of us who had already invested a significant amount of time and effort to get the show going. At the time, I was speaking with Judy Patterson of CD Management about arranging some Hoffman Challenge displays for some of her shows. We began discussing that our show was being cancelled. I explained to her that we really wanted to focus on putting together a wonderful quilt display, but lacked the resources to pay for pipe, drape, insurance, security, and the facility. A wonderful union was formed. Judy offered to partner with us. She is working with the vendor mall, permitting us to concentrate on the display.

Our first show had around 2,000 attendees, and we received wonderful comments about the quality of the display. Many visitors were Hoffman Challenge partici-



*Show attendee Marty Osecky visits with Kelly Gallagher-Abbott in front of part of the Hoffman Challenge display.*



*Excited attendees eagerly wait to enter the show!*

*Continued from page 3*

pants from outside of Colorado. Maintaining the momentum was a brief concern, but we decided to plan for a yearly show. It can be difficult to get enough quilts for an annual display from a small geographical area. I frequently travel to teach and lecture, and used the opportunity to begin building relationships with other guilds around Colorado.

I'm a big supporter of guilds, and completely understand their budget needs and the fact that most have a foundational mission statement about promoting quiltmaking, educating the public, and displaying the members' work.

Since we were no longer affiliated with a specific guild, we had the opportunity to work with many guilds, and hoped that in addition to displaying their members' fiber art, the guilds could earn money for their organization. We offered seven different guilds a 10x10' space for fundraising, and an additional three spaces for display at no cost.

We do ask them for some volunteer time, and there is a minimal fee for each quilt submitted to offset the supplies and equipment we need to hang the entries. Some seemed a bit confused by this offer, and they wondered what we were trying to get out of the deal. In the end, all guilds were very pleased with the arrangement, and they have asked to be included in future shows. It was a win-win situation. We had over 600 incredible items to share with the viewers; and guilds had the opportunity to earn income, introduce themselves to potential new members, and offer their members the ability to have their quilts seen by thousands of people without the expense and work of putting on their own shows.



*Second Place was awarded to Irena Bluhm of Antlers, OK, for "Hummingbird."*

**The show committee also awarded ribbons to Pat Bundy for "Starburst," Lynn Jaenke for "To Russia with Love," Vinda Robison for "Nautilus," Nettie Smith for "Firecracker," Sharon Scholtzhauer for "Light Below the Surface," and Sharon Schmidt for "Woodland Creatures." These quilts can all be seen on [www.rockymountainquiltfoundation.org](http://www.rockymountainquiltfoundation.org).**



*Third Place was given to Sharon Scholtzhauer of Colorado Springs for "America the Beautiful."*

I am not aware of any other collaborative effort like this in the quilt world. Shortly after the first show, we formed the Rocky Mountain Quilt Foundation, a non-profit group that will continue to put on the display for this show.

We applied for and received a Fort Fund grant from the city of Fort Collins given to organizations that promote art and tourism in this area. It provided us with the finances to bring in talented teachers David Taylor and Patty Hawkins. Because of the success of the event and classes, we now have operating funds for future educational events.

We also pay it forward -- we've developed an alliance with ChildSafe, a local organization that provides therapy to sexually abused children. Over \$3,500 raised by our opportunity quilt was given to this organization. We also make quilts for the children receiving their services.

Darlene Bengford, Jean Poland, Barbara Cohen, Colleen Little, Julie Breidt, Shawnette Sherwood, Kathy Nicolai, Lisa Rudd, Margaret Mientka, and Marsha Landry all deserve a tremendous amount of credit for their dedicated work on this show. An additional group of 50 or more willing volunteers spent hundreds of hours helping to set up and run the show. Many of the attendees informed us that the quality of the display rivals the largest regional shows.

Next year's show is scheduled for August 20-22, 2010. Please consider visiting beautiful Colorado to see this fabulous display. 🍷



*RMQF board member Barbara Cohen (left) stands with Jane Bradley of the Childsafe Organization. The quilt behind them is the "Heart Strings" quilt designed by Cindy Cooksey of Irvine, CA, and made by the RMQF members and community volunteers.*

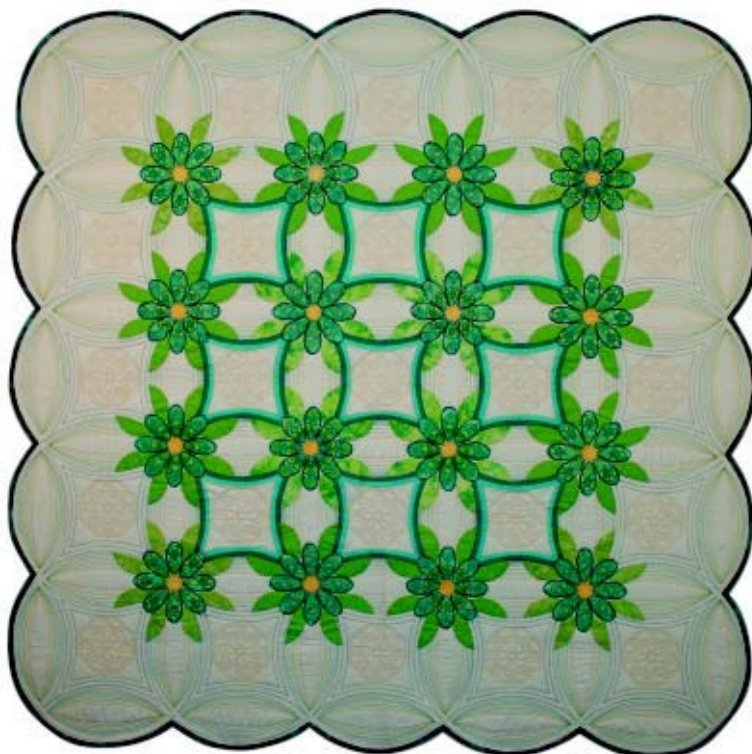


About Kelly Gallagher-Abbott

Kelly is owner of Jukebox Quilts ([www.jukeboxquilts.com](http://www.jukeboxquilts.com)) and curator of the Hoffman Challenge. She lives in Fort Collins, CO, with her husband and three children.

For more information, please visit:

- [www.rockymountainquiltfestival.com](http://www.rockymountainquiltfestival.com)
- [www.jukeboxquilts.com](http://www.jukeboxquilts.com)
- [www.childsafecolorado.org](http://www.childsafecolorado.org)
- [davidtaylorquilts.com](http://davidtaylorquilts.com)
- [www.rockymountainquiltfoundation.org](http://www.rockymountainquiltfoundation.org)
- [www.hoffmanchallenge.com](http://www.hoffmanchallenge.com)
- [pattyhawkins.com](http://pattyhawkins.com)



## The Hoffman Challenge

Each year Hoffman Fabrics designates one fabric that can be used in a quilt, doll, clothing or accessory.

Entries are sent to Colorado from around the world in late July. The competition is judged, and then selected entries travel in collections to displays at guilds, shows and museums. This year's beautiful fabric is Treasures of the East Style G9031 Turquoise/Gold. Visit your local quilt shop for this fabric and suggested coordinates, and please see [www.hoffmanchallenge.com](http://www.hoffmanchallenge.com) for rules and the application. Sulky is a cosponsor of this completion, and over 40 prize packages are available.

Entries must be received by July 23, 2010.

