FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Twenty Years of Voices Through the Lens

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, Nova Scotia (September 8, 2026) – In 2006, Nat and Susan Tileston launched the “MY STORY” photo project (msppa.org) in collaboration with five young people from the “Karen Women’s Youth Organization” on the Thai-Myanmar border. Their idea was to place the tools of photography directly in the hands of local people, enabling them to document their own lives and communities.

The “MY STORY” photo project teaches participants how to see like a photographer. Cell phones are used because just about everyone has one in their pocket and they are affordable. Participants are introduced to basic photographic and video tools, and then the rest is up to them. Students are given shooting assignments: people at work and at home, their best friends, a feeling, a movement, or just about anything that catches their attention. Their images and short videos are critiqued by the group before they edit them into an exhibition, a process that is both challenging and rewarding.

To support these workshops, MSPPA raised funds to purchase digital cameras and collaborated with community-based organizations along the border. Each workshop, typically lasting seven to ten days, culminates in an exhibition where photographs are offered for sale. Half of the proceeds return to the photographer, while the other half supports the purchase of new cameras, helping ensure that the project continues to grow.

Together, Nat and Susan Tileston brought more than five decades of professional experience as photographers in New York City and Nova Scotia, much of it devoted to documenting dance and theatre. Their commitment to this project reflected both a desire to share their skills and an openness to learning from other cultures. After Nat’s passing in 2019, Susan carried forward their shared vision, continuing to teach, to learn from her students, and to find joy in the exchange.

Since its inception, the “MY STORY” project has trained more than 834 students and 26 photo workshop leaders in Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, Mexico, and Canada. Fifty exhibitions have been presented in Thailand, Canada, the United States, Ireland, Vietnam, and Mexico. Each participant keeps their camera, preserving the ability to continue telling their story long after the workshop has ended.

The 2026 exhibition at ARTSPLACE Gallery marks the project’s 20th year. This year, in addition to working with Myanmar refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border, MSPPA worked with elders from HelpAge.org in Hanoi and with the Laos Education Opportunities Trust in Luang Prabang, Laos.

For the 20th anniversary of the project, two exhibitions in Annapolis Royal are scheduled, each featuring different artworks spanning the last 20 years. The exhibition at ARTSPLACE Gallery opens September 12, and the exhibition at the Flora Hall Gallery at King’s Theatre opens September 22.

“The Last Picture Show, MY STORY photo project #20”, opening ARTSPLACE reception, September 12, 12-2pm. Light refreshments served, all welcome. Exhibition continues through October 31. King’s Theatre Flora Hall Gallery Sept. 22-Nov. 3

ARTSPLACE is a public Art Gallery that is operated by the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council, a registered charitable, community organization dedicated to encouraging and promoting the arts. Supported through the Province of Nova Scotia and the Canada Council for the Arts.

ARTSPLACE Gallery is located at 396 St. George Street in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia

For more information please contact:
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Facebook: ARTSPLACEGallery
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