

# ‘Natural Beauty’ poster reflects region’s balance

By Michelle L. Quinn Post-Tribune correspondent May 11, 2011 9:48PM

MUNSTER — The Shirley Heinze Land Trust celebrated the kick-off of its 30th birthday by unveiling its birthday present to itself.

Members of the Trust, the Northwest Indiana Forum and BP Whiting Refinery gathered Wednesday evening at the Center for Performing and Visual Arts to see “Natural Beauty,” an amalgamation of the region’s landscape and industry delicately balanced by Whiting artist Barbara Spies Labus’ paintbrush. Labus unveiled the painting for the crowd.

The idea was developed over the course of the year between Labus and Peg Moore, with the trust. Without Moore, Labus said, her painting could not have been as opulent.

“Peg gave me some rich, concise descriptions and sense of the places,” Labus said. “I’m an enthusiast but not an expert, and without her help and the help of others, (the painting) would never been as evocative of the landscapes.”

The top of the poster depicts Lake Michigan and the Indiana Dunes, she explained, while other landscapes depicted the Ambler Flatwoods in Michigan City, the Little Cal Wetlands Preserve in Chesterton, the black-soil prairie at Cressmoor and the bur oak savanna at Bur Oak Woods in Hobart. A green heron, Karner blue butterfly and Blanding’s turtle round out the fauna she painted.

Kris Krouse, executive director for the trust, praised Labus for her talent and said 2011 is an important time for the trust, which has restored some 1,200 acres of land all over Northwest Indiana to its natural state.

“It’s an important time to further our mission,” he said.

BP Whiting Refinery underwrote the project via a \$10,000 grant to Labus, said Brad Etlin, government and public affairs director for BP America Inc. Etlin called the poster “reflective” of Northwest Indiana.

“I think it’s perfect,” he said. “You have the land mixed with the industrial and residential community. And it’s nice to see someone in Whiting doing the artwork.”

“Natural Beauty” is one of more than 75 posters put out or rereleased by South Shore Poster Arts Management. They’re available for \$40 through the trust at [www.heinzetrust.org](http://www.heinzetrust.org) or the South Shore Arts Gallery at [www.southshoreartsonline.org](http://www.southshoreartsonline.org).