

Santa Fe Spotlight

Splash Trash Educator Following Her Heart

By Martin Frentzel

SANTA FE – It's a line from *The Graduate* that Baby Boomers should find familiar: "Plastics."

Yes, back in the 1960s plastic was the answer for everything. Don't like your nose, get plastic surgery. Toys didn't need to be made from metal when plastic was cheaper. Even fishermen started using plastic worms. Wood rots and metal rusts away, but plastic? It lasts a long, long time.



The Re-Birth of Venus, winning art created by the Santa Fe Girls' School sixth-grade students and coached by Bette Booth.

Photo by Martin Frentzel

Today, plastic bottles and trash are strewn about our hiking trails, campgrounds, even ocean beaches across the world. Santa Fe artist turned educator Bette Booth, however, intends to do something about it.

WORLDWIDE DEBUT

"Plastic never goes away and it's everywhere," she says. "It's in our food supply. It's not just a six-pack ring around a sea

turtle; we are eating it."

Booth, 66, had a career as an international environmental communications and marketing professional. Work took her to 30 countries, but it was her time off, a vacation, that led to her reincarnation as an environmental activist and educator. The plastic trash on her vacation beach made her cry, but when the tears dried she sacked up the waste and started making mobiles with a glue gun.

Those mobiles have grown into the Splash Trash Tour, which can be compressed into a 4-foot by 6-foot trailer that she is taking on the road to Florida in January. She will be visiting schools and clubs, raising awareness of the plastic pollution problem. The worldwide debut for the tour was at the 18th annual Recycle Santa Fe Art Festival in December.

"The tour shows people the magnitude of the problem," Booth says. "And we try to get the participants to make a pledge to do something, to use less plastic for a month. When people do something for 30 days, it's more likely to stick; it becomes a habit. If people will do that, they can make a difference."

Booth already made a difference by serving as the artistic coach for a class of sixth-grade girls from the Santa Fe Girls' School. The girls entered the school competition at the art festival and won with a stunning assemblage of plastic beach trash portraying a variation of a classical theme. Booth's trash from beaches in Hawaii and Honduras was used to illustrate "The Re-birth of Venus," inspired by the Italian Renaissance painting "The Birth



Santa Fe artist and educator Bette Booth and her beach trash mobiles.
Photo by Martin Frentzel

of Venus" by Botticelli.

In Botticelli's painting, Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty, is shown rising from the sea on a shell. In the work of the Santa Fe students, a decoupage bodice of ocean creatures rests on a beach of tiny bits of plastic and other found plastic objects – the arms and heads of dolls, a horse head, a telephone, car seats, vehicle wheels, handles, shovels and spoons.

"Working with kids is the best," Booth exclaims. "They are the ones who are going to

have to live with there being more pounds of plastic in the ocean than pounds of fish, and they get it."

FOLLOW YOUR HEART

Becoming an environmental educator at 66 is an easy step for Booth, whose own father, Arden, showed her the way. "He had several incarnations," she says. He owned the radio station in Lawrence, Kan., before becoming a state senator in the Land of Aahs.

"He never thought of how old he was," Booth says. "He taught me that when the passion hits you, you've got to follow your heart."

That lesson is now leading her down passion's path, making people aware of the plastic trash on the world's beaches and getting them to do something about it.

Her website is www.splashtrashtour.com. She has aligned with other recycling, educational and environmental organizations like Algalita, OneMoreGeneration.org, 5GYRES, the Florida Microplastic Awareness Project, OneLessStraw.org, and Ocean First Education.



Plastic trash from Japan, part of the Splash Trash Tour.

Photo by Martin Frentzel