

## Impact Statement

Helena Merker, Grade 11.

***Savior of the Dunes***, 2019.

Colored pencil on paper, 18 x 24 Inches.

Bergen County Academies, Hackensack, NJ

Unsung Hero: Dorothy Buell

Throughout history, many individuals have made heroic contributions to society but failed to receive fitting recognition for their hard work. Dorothy Buell is one of these unsung heroes, and her tireless fight to save the Indiana Dunes is an inspiration to environmentalists everywhere. By founding the Save the Dunes Council, Buell led the fight to preserve the dunes against industrialization and development. She recognized the beauty in the natural wonder of the dunes, and her community service towards preserving the environment she loved emphasizes her distinguished qualities both as a leader and a citizen.

Dorothy Buell was unique in her ability to inspire activism in others. She led a group of women to preserve the threatened dunes, and their efforts included writing articles, publishing brochures, and researching the proposed development plans. At a time when women were not usually involved in activism, Buell persevered through her protest against the industrialization of the dunes. Her optimism, determination, and grace under pressure shined through as an inspiration for future activists. It took a tremendous amount of courage for Buell and the rest of the Save the Dunes Council to go up against a big steel company, Steel Mills. Buell's dedication is emphasized by her success in reaching out to others and publicizing her cause, as well as her ability to garner support from local officials. Furthermore, Buell is a role model to all those who selflessly work to improve their community. Her commitment to saving the natural beauty of the dunes from development is an inspiration to anyone who is passionate about a cause that they believe in.

The vision behind my creative interpretation was to illustrate Buell among the dunes she worked so hard to save. As a result, I depicted Buell standing in the dunes taking a picture of three herons. I wanted my artwork to highlight the beauty of the landscape, and therefore I showed the dunes in the foreground and the lakes in the background. To capture the vivid life of the dunes, I used vibrant green, orange, and brown tones. This created visual contrast against the blue of the lakes. In addition, the sky near the horizon contains the warm yellow and pink tones of a sunrise. The inclusion of a sunrise within the picture symbolically represents how Buell's enthusiasm for the preservation of the dunes ushered in a new era of environmental activism, particularly among women. Furthermore, the calm nature of the landscape conveys the serenity of the dunes and the preciousness of the wildlife the dunes protected. Overall, the main vision behind my illustration was to convey Buell's love for the dunes and encapsulate the beauty of the environment.

I shared the project within my community by raising awareness about Buell and her activism. Buell's cause was of major historical significance, and her efforts grew to fruition with the establishment of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. As a result, I worked with students in my school and community to educate others on Buell's contributions to the preservation of the

dunes. I wanted to use my illustration to inspire others to protect national treasures just like Buell did, and thus my artwork served as a visual portrayal of the preciousness of the landscape that Buell safeguarded from harm. By sharing my illustration with other students, I encouraged participation in the ARTEFFECT Project and the Discovery Award. I also highlighted the importance of recognizing unsung heroes whose actions were instrumental in bringing about positive change. Furthermore, I used my illustration to raise awareness about Buell's everlasting legacy. Without Buell, the natural wildlife within the dunes would be lost. Therefore, sharing my project educates others on the importance of environmental activism and the wide-reaching impact of Buell's actions.

Dorothy Buell was instrumental in securing the preservation of the Indiana Dunes and the establishment of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Her leadership is an inspiration to all those who work to help their community and the environment. Buell took action at a time when the dunes were threatened, and her courage and confidence is a role-model to activists everywhere. Without Dorothy Buell, the national treasures within the Indiana Dunes would be lost. Buell truly is an unsung hero who selflessly worked to preserve the dunes she knew and loved.