



Impact Statement

Gracie Prosise, Grade 11

Sunset on the Dunes, 2026

Embroidery, 8 x 8 inches

Eldorado High School, Eldorado, IL

Unsung Hero: Dorothy Buell

For my Unsung Hero project, I chose Dorothy Buell, an environmental activist who played a huge role in protecting the Indiana Dunes. I chose her because she stood up for something she believed in even when it wasn't easy, and she helped save a natural place that people still enjoy today. What I find most inspiring about her is her determination and her ability to bring people together for a cause. She didn't just care about nature, she actually took action to protect it, which makes her a strong role model.

Dorothy Buell's impact on history is bigger than most people realize. She was the founder of the Save the Dunes Council, a group dedicated to preserving the Indiana Dunes from industrial development. At the time, there were plans to turn large parts of the dunes into factories and industrial land. Instead of ignoring it, she organized people, raised awareness, and pushed for change. Because of her efforts, large parts of the Indiana Dunes were protected and eventually became part of a national park. This didn't just affect her community—it made a lasting impact on the environment and future generations. Today, people can still visit the dunes, walk along the beaches, and experience the natural beauty she fought to protect. My research showed that without her leadership, a lot of that land might have been lost forever.

My embroidery piece represents both Dorothy Buell and the Indiana Dunes through a natural landscape scene. I stitched a sunset over water, sand, and grassy dunes, inspired by how the Indiana Dunes look. The bright colors in the sky show how beautiful and worth protecting the environment is. The detailed stitching in the grass and sand represents the uniqueness of the dunes' ecosystem. I focused on texture and layers in my embroidery to show depth, just like the real dunes have different plants, and natural features. The cabin in my piece represents how Dorothy Buell lived with her family in a cabin, connecting her personal life to the natural environment she worked so hard to protect. By choosing embroidery, I wanted to create something that felt handmade and personal, just like the effort Dorothy Buell put into her work. Every stitch reflects care and time, like how protecting the environment takes patience and dedication.

This project has changed how I think about my own actions and the environment. Dorothy Buell's story shows that even one person can make a difference if they care enough and stay committed. It made me realize that protecting nature isn't just something for scientists or adults—it's something anyone can be part of. Her work inspires me to be more aware of environmental issues and to speak up about things that matter. In the future, I would like to

share my artwork and her story with others, especially people my age, to show that young people can care about and protect the environment too. I could see this project being displayed in an art show or school event where it can spread awareness about the Indiana Dunes and Dorothy Buell's impact.