

# An Inn for the Arts and Sciences

## *Oceanside Meadows Offers Bed, Breakfast and Culture*

By Marriah Shields

**G**OULDSBORO—Modern art and science, plus a chandelier, in an early 19th century timber-frame barn—to Oceanside Meadows Inn owners Sonja Sundaram and Ben Walter it's a dream come true.

Five years ago, in 1995, the two scientists-turned-innkeepers bought the property next to their inn, a former sea-captain's home dating from around 1860. The new property included a barn, believed to date from around 1820, which someone else might have seen as storage space or even as a liability.

Walter and Sundaram saw a center for the arts and sciences. First, however, they saw a major renovation project.

"It was a mess," said Sundaram. "You couldn't even see the barn's floor."

British-born Walter is a marine biologist and ecotoxicologist. Sundaram, originally from

Maine, is a geologist with a background in teaching. The two met at an environmental studies program in Bermuda in 1990, and eventually made their way back up north.

"I grew up in Maine and it really reminded Ben of the west banks of Scotland," said Sundaram. "It was perfect for us."

Moving to Maine and buying a bed-and-breakfast meant giving up the lab and refocusing. But they didn't want to give up science completely. They decided if they couldn't go out to science anymore, they'd bring the science to them.

"What we want to do is discover experts in different fields in the area and give people an opportunity to share that," said Sundaram.

The barn was fully renovated by 1998, and named the Oceanside Meadows Institute for the Arts and Sciences. The chandelier was hung and 125



STAFF PHOTO BY MARRIAH SHIELDS

After a three-year renovation, Sonja Sundaram and Ben Walter now offer a series of summer

lectures and concerts in the barn at their Prospect Harbor inn.

chairs were set around a small stage, and the cultural events started materializing. "It's a dream-come-true-type thing," said Sundaram.

"This is more than just a

place to listen to music or look at art," Oceanside Meadows regular Larry Barnes commented after a June concert. "It's a social gathering place where people become friends from near and far and young and old. There are some hidden treasures in Downeast Maine, and this is one of them."

This summer, a full roster of music, arts and science events has been scheduled. The barn also will be the site for the Opera Maine chamber music