

Artist Joanie Keast creates Three Sisters mosaic

By Katy Yoder
Correspondent

Mosaic artist Joanie Keast learned a lot from her career in the Silicon Valley — but not in the way you’d think. She didn’t work for a high-tech company like Apple, instead she followed her life-long dream of being a mortician. One of her final clients was Steve Jobs and she was part of the team that prepared the visionary for the hereafter.

“I’m grateful for the 25 years as a mortician because so much of who I am comes from that,” said Keast. “The job deals with the sadder side of life every day. I learned to deal with it and found it shaped my outlook on life. It made me realize how short life can be and to see the beauty in people and their stories.”

Keast also learned how important the wisdom of those older than her was and how much they could teach her.

“My parents taught us to appreciate nature and that what we have doesn’t have to be new and shiny.”

That lesson translated into her creation of mosaics art pieces. Once she and her husband, Brian, settled into their home off Holmes Road, Keast got to work on her new passion.

“My life began with parents that supported my creative side. They even encouraged me when, at the age of 16, I told them I wanted to be a mortician,” she laughed. “I don’t think they believed me, but they encouraged me anyway.”

With her transition to a Central Oregon lifestyle firmly in place, Keast has enjoyed meeting new friends and gathering items for future mosaics.

“People give me things



PHOTO PROVIDED

Joanie Keast at work on a mosaic of the Three Sisters, which she unveiled last week.

that have personal connections to me like my grandfather’s bolo tie.”

In addition to including items she’s collected from myriad sources, Keast always includes a watch face set to the time of her birth as her personal signature.

“I love the materials I use like a broken piece of china or a single earring. I want to give them a second life,” she said.

While she’s working on a new mosaic, Keast wonders about each piece’s story. She becomes attached to them and loves giving them new meaning.

Her latest project was unveiled during an open house at her home where it is installed in the kitchen. The mosaic is twenty-four feet long with twenty-three pieces that fit together like a giant puzzle. Her husband, Brian is a retired contractor and helped Keast by building the cutouts she used to affix the tiles.

This time, she chose a technique that doesn’t have any seam lines. With her husband’s help they lifted all

the pieces 12 feet above the kitchen.

“I wanted this work to honor this area,” she said. “What better way than the Three Sisters? It’s been my project for the last year.”

Keast hosted the open house to share her latest work with her friends. Guests kept staring at the mosaic, seeing more details as they gazed at her creation. Sunbursts, swirling sky and the Three Sisters tower over the kitchen. The charismatic colors are woven with pieces of jewelry, animal figures, pebbles and granite. Only a Central Oregonian knows that the colors Keast chose, no matter how bright, can truly be found in a Sisters sunset or the waters of the Metolius River.

Coming from a bustling city in the Bay Area, Keast’s work reflects her appreciation for the beauty around her.

“I’m coming from true gratitude and I want my mosaics to show that.”

Keast’s work also embodies the idea that second chances are available for us

all. Each item she incorporates into her work, represents an old story with a new chapter still unfolding.

With Brian’s help building the frames for her mosaics and his constant encouragement,

the two have made a formidable team.

“We’re so happy to have found this area, we love the people!” she said. “It’s been better than we could have hoped.”

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