



Carol Westlake with Rusty Vos

Art for Health

Local artists knit a safety net for one of their own

Cancer. That's not a word anyone wants to hear, but for self-employed creative types, it's especially terrifying.

Eugene artist Carol Westlake is a jeweler who normally attends craft shows all over the West. But her June diagnosis of a rare form of cancer (embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma) devastated her work life — and her health care costs keep on rising.

The community of artists has been quick to respond. More than 60 artists, including people like Mark Clarke, Peg Coe, Betsy Wolfston and Hannah Goldrich, have banded together to help Westlake. Their work will be available at an auction and benefit for Westlake on Sunday, Nov. 4, at Bel Ami Restaurant. Along with the silent auction, benefit planners (and sister artists) Rogene Manas and Kacey Joyce have created a raffle, snagged some live music and arranged for a no-host bar.

Westlake, now recovering from a round of chemotherapy, appreciates the aid and the encouragement. "It's been very healing for me to see how much support I'm getting," she says.

Westlake and her partner, Walt "Rusty" Vos, tried to figure out a way to deal with craft shows this summer. Vos attended several while Westlake began treatment, but she needed him as a caretaker at home, and so their main source of income dried up. Sattva Gallery sells her jewelry, but it's otherwise quite difficult for Vos or Westlake to get their work on the market.

In addition, though Westlake — unlike many artists — has paid for her own health insurance for years, the coverage, she says, recently got cut in half, and her deductible is high. "It's basically disaster insurance at this point," she says.

And to make matters worse, the chemo hurt Westlake's hands. "The neuropathy has made my hands so oversensitive that it's hard opening the mail," she says. Jewelry-

making? Not an option.

Westlake has long participated in the web of artistic Eugene. Manas met her decades ago when they both took part in the Designers' Forum, a nonprofit graphic design group. When Manas and others opened Photo Tidings, essentially a greeting card company in its early days, they subcontracted photography work to Westlake. And ever since Westlake decided to move into fulltime jewelry-making, she's been a secure, certain face on the craft show circuit. Until this year.

"It's such a hand-to-mouth life that so many artists have," Manas says. And while she admires Westlake's lifestyle in general, she didn't want her friend to suffer financially. "She is very frugal and has such a small footprint on the earth. She never asks anybody for anything," Manas says. So Manas and Joyce began to plan the auction.

They have been surprised and pleased by the response from other artists. "Adam Grosowsky contributed something!" Manas says. "He doesn't even know her, and he's given one of the largest donations."

Westlake, who's in the middle of looking at alternative treatment options, doesn't want this to be the last time artists band together. She's not the only one needing help, she says. And she hopes to return the favor. "I want to be able to stick around and get better enough to be able to help other people in the future." *ew*

WAYS TO HELP

The Art Auction and Benefit for Carol Westlake runs from 5 pm to 9 pm Sunday, Nov. 4, at Bel Ami Restaurant, 1591 Willamette St.

Donations may be made to the Carol Westlake Cancer Care Fund at any Oregon Community Credit Union.

Sattva Gallery in the Meridian Building at 18th and Willamette sells Westlake's jewelry; most of the proceeds go to the fund.

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