

Old stuff, new art

Repurposed Art Competition draws student interest and donates to local charities

Tamara Pohlman hates to throw things away. She really hates it. She believes that there are many uses for items and materials that are routinely discarded. Some of these uses are practical and some are, if you will, more whimsical.

Pohlman feels that people can reduce and reuse so much more than they realize, that she started a business based on this belief.

Pohlman dedicates her time and energy to finding like-minded individuals, with a strong creative streak, and providing them with a space to share their work with the people of Florence.

The Resto-Arts Gallery in Historic Old Town on Bay Street is the manifestation of those ideals. It displays work from local artisans that have reused discarded materials and turned them into practical or beautiful pieces that are entirely different than the original manufacturer intended.

This holiday season, Pohlman decided that she wanted to expand her efforts and worked out a way to involve Siuslaw High School students with SHS art instructor, Kim Pickell.

They came up with an idea they hoped would inspire students to look at their trash in a new light.

Pohlman says Pickell was enthusiastic about the idea from the beginning and the two fleshed out the concept rather quickly.

“Restorative art is my passion,” Pohlman said. “And we have so many great artists here in Florence, I thought, what about nurturing this creativity in high school so that the students can grow into this, and maybe they will rethink what they throw away and maybe think outside the box artistically.”

The end result of the brainstorming session between Pohlman and Pickell had a two-fold objective: First, a competition that would reward participating students with the opportunity to win some holiday spending money, and, second, to develop their artistic skill set at the same time.

Pohlman and Pickell called their recycled brainchild, “the first annual Repurposed Art Competition.”

The competition was open to all Siuslaw High School students and awarded the top three entries a cash prize and highlighted display space in the Resto-Art Gallery.

Pohlman added that this was important so the students can complete the process of conceptualizing, creating, displaying and hopefully selling their work.

“The reason I decided to give cash prizes is that teenagers are not only really busy, but sometimes they need a little extra motivation to do something extra curricular,” she said.

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

The criteria for entries was simple. Objects had to be primarily made from reused materials and the work had to be turned in to the high school for judging.

The response from the students was encouraging and many followed through on the process, creating a wide variety of artistic objects.

“Ultimately there were 10 pieces entered into the inaugural Repurposed Art Competition and the judges had a difficult time deciding on the three winners,” Pohlman said.

Seven judges, including Pohlman, Pickell and Siuslaw High School instructors, judged the pieces.

“The quality of the entries was very high and the judges had some hard decisions to make,” Pohlman said. “Eventually I decided to add two honorable mention winners, just because the pieces were so good.”

The young artists’ finished pieces were then displayed in Pohlman’s gallery and immediately attracted attention.

“Benjamin Cahoon won first prize and his piece sold almost immediately, which is great. The customers that bought the winning entry were really nice and agreed to leave it in the gallery to the end of the year so everyone can see it,” Pohlman said.

Cahoon’s artwork was titled, “What Are You Waiting For?” and featured typography, metal, clock and lamp parts and an old picture frame. He won \$250.

The second place winner of the competition was Jessalynn Keppol, winning \$150 for a copper wire tree on a metal base, and third place went to Maya Howard, winning \$50 for a dragon sculpture made from tin from soda cans.



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Resto-Arts owner Tamara Pohlman displays the top three finishers in the first annual Repurposed Art Competition. Siuslaw High School students were awarded cash prizes and will donate all proceeds from the sale of their pieces to local charities of their choosing.



Resto-Arts owner Tamara Pohlman (left) and Art Instructor Kim Pickell (right) present plaques to Jessalynn Keppol and Maya Howard, the second and third place winners.

Honorable mention went to Nathaniel Jones for a welded metal man sculpture and to Hayley Hensley and Hope Garcia for their dream catcher.

These pieces have also attracted some attention.

Pohlman believes that all the artists that entered the repurposed event have learned a great deal from the experience. She looks forward to expanding the competition in the future to include middle school and elementary students and increasing the overall number of participants.

To view the winning entries in the re-purposed art competition, stop in to The Resto-Arts Gallery at 1255 Bay St.