

Siuslaw News Coast Life

SENIOR NEWS CALENDAR

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A *fresh* look for Old Town

Florence Public Art Committee unveils first outdoor art installation with help from Siuslaw art students

BY MARK BRENNAN
Siuslaw News

The old saying, “One man’s trash, is another man’s treasure,” has taken on a new meaning with the placement of the first public art exhibit approved and coordinated by the City of Florence and its Public Arts Committee (PAC).

PAC and students from Siuslaw Middle School have created and placed the initial project, a refurbishment of trash receptacles in Old Town.

The first official project approved by the committee and ready for placement may not be the pinnacle of artistic achievement, but it is significant as a starting point for what is to come.

The first art installation was placed on Bay Street Monday morning and consists of 15 brightly colored trash receptacles with individually painted scenes or themes on the covers.

Florence Public Works Director Mike Miller was on hand for the delivery of the finished works of art.

Miller has been working with the PAC since its inception.

“It’s a partnership, and as the art committee grows and they get new pieces of art, the city will be there to help do the installations, like the foundation work and the concrete bases, those types of things,” Miller said. “We will help out with the actual mounting of the different art pieces. It’s very much a collaboration between the city, Florence Urban Renewal Agency and the Public Art Committee.”

The receptacle lids were designed and painted by 20 students who participated in the project Saturday at Siuslaw Middle School.



PHOTOS BY MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Members of the Florence Public Art Committee coordinated with Siuslaw students to paint Old Town’s trash receptacles. The public art project is now on display on Bay Street and in the rest of Old Town.

PAC members, along with middle school teacher Kelly Dotson and high school teacher Kim Pickell, were present to assist and encourage the student artists.

PAC member Jennifer French believes the students were pleased with the opportunity to

contribute to the effort.

“The kids kept thanking us for letting them do this project. They love art and creative projects, but sadly, don’t get much art in their schools due to lack of funding,” French said. “Most of these students were very passionate about their art. Being able to express themselves through their art and to cheer up Bay Street, all at the same time, was great.”

Miller said that an additional benefit of the project was a visual upgrade to the area.

“The trash receptacles are at the end of their useful life. But having a nice fresh paint job and having the children do the actual art work is a very nice testament to both the art committee and the beautification of Old Town,” Miller said.

French echoed Miller’s com-



Siuslaw students spent several hours over May 5 to 9 prepping and painting the trash receptacle lids.



ments in regard to the spring-like nature of the project.

“We let the teachers know we wanted our receptacles to be fun, colorful, clever, bright, bold and done with much fun. Both teachers found art students who were thrilled to arrive early on a Saturday morning, and paint trash can lids for several hours,” French said. “We’re in the process now of ordering plaques for each trash can and the names of each student will be attached to their specific art piece. The students are very proud of this whole project and were very happy to be able to take part.”

PAC has additional projects in its pipeline. These will offer local residents some new and unusual art to enjoy.

“I know the committee is working on several different projects,” said Miller. “There are a couple of art pieces that have been donated to the city. One is a totem pole and the PAC is deciding where that is going to go. And there are also some murals on the exterior wall of the PUD warehouse.”

French said she is excited by the upcoming adventures in art the city will have the opportunity to experience.

“We have plans to install creative and ‘wow-type’ murals, sculptures, donated art pieces and much more. We even have plans to do a rotating outdoor-type gallery, called Exposed Art, throughout Old Town,” she said. “Now, we are at that point where we can finally start having more fun sharing public art with our Florence community and all those who visit our lovely town.”

For more information about Florence Public Art committee and its projects, contact Florence City Recorder Kelli Weese at 541-997-3437.

‘BIG WAVE’ OF POETRY ROLLS INTO FLORENCE

Florence Regional Arts Alliance brings back Spoken Word Poetry Contest May 12 and 13

The second annual Big Wave Poetry Festival, sponsored by Florence Regional Arts Center (FRAA), takes place May 12 and 13 at the Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St.

Friday evening, starting at 6 p.m., is the Spoken Word Poetry Contest, when 30 poets from around the state will perform their 3-minute original poems while competing for the largest cash prizes in the state for poetry.

First prize is \$500 and second place receives \$250. In addition, there are four category prizes of \$100 each for “best humor,” “nature,” “personal reflections” and “social commentary.”

Judging for the contest is done by five random audience members, scoring each participant from 0 to 10. The top and bottom scores are thrown out and the three middle scores are added together for the poet’s final score.

Audience members are encouraged to snap their fingers during parts of the poems they like, and to voice opinions about the judges’ scores by booing or cheering.

As FRAA committee co-chair Karen Brown explained, “This ain’t your grandma’s poetry. Even people who profess not to like poetry will love this competition with 3-minute performances that will move you to tears one moment and laughter the next.”

The event starts at 6 p.m., but from 5 to 6 p.m. is a “meet and greet” with the poets.

Admission is \$10 and tickets can be purchased at the door.

At 3 p.m. on Saturday is the Teen Spoken Word Poetry Contest for middle and high school students. Poems must be original and limited to 3 minutes.

Cash prizes of \$100, \$50 and \$25 will be given to first, second and third place winners.

Admission is free.

Teens who wish to participate can sign up at www.fraaoregon.org under “Poetry Fest,” or go to the FRAA Art Center, 120 Maple St., and sign up in person.

Saturday evening, starting at 6:30 p.m., will be the premier showing of a documentary called “From Prison to Purpose,” the story of Noah Schultz, former resident of Camp Florence.

This is the story of Schultz’s life, from drug dealer and gang member, to college grad, social activist, TEDx speaker and award-winning poet.

The film shows how and why Schultz got involved in the life of crime, starting at age 12, what happened to cause him to be sentenced to 90 months of incarceration, and how he transformed his life while in prison.

Schultz will be at the screening, along with Stephen Fowler, last year’s Big Wave Poetry Contest win-

ner and another graduate of Camp Florence who transformed his life while incarcerated.

Schultz and Fowler will talk about their personal journeys and perform spoken word poetry.

“These two young men are so inspiring,” says Big Wave Poetry Fest co-chair, Judy Plumery. “They each spent from ages 17 to 24 years in juvenile detention facilities, but were able to use that time to change who they were and now they help other young people who are going down the wrong path.”

Admission is \$10.

For more information about the Big Wave Poetry Fest events, visit www.fraaoregon.org and click on “Poetry Fest.”

Tickets can be purchased at the door of the events center or at the FRAA Art Center.

Big Wave Poetry Fest T-shirts are available for purchase at the FRAA Art Center and at each of the events.