

Art from A1



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

**While Nguyen's art is on view this month in the Axe and Fiddle, she hopes to exhibit "A Portrait of Cottage Grove" next spring in local museums, galleries, libraries or other public spaces.**

grants for artists in this area. You have to be affiliated with a nonprofit, so it was really exciting to apply for something just as a person."

The Artist Grant program was launched by Lane Arts Council this year, giving out \$9,120 in all. The program is funded by the City of Eugene Cultural Services Division, Banner Bank and individual donors and provides financial support to individual artists to move forward a new project or creative endeavor that promises to advance their career or artistic development.

With the grant money, Nguyen is primed to develop her project, "A Portrait of Cottage Grove," which will include solo art exhibits and a published artbook of her oil portraits and landscapes.

"It's a project I've wanted to do, but it's big," she said.

The project endeavors to piece together a mosaic of the community through portraits of local people. Nguyen hopes people will walk away from the experience feeling they've connected with someone.

"A city is not solely its architecture, landscapes or residences. The heart of any city lies in its communities," she said.

In all, she anticipates producing between 60-85 portraits for the project.

The concept was inspired by Nguyen's steady

increase in affection for Cottage Grove over her 15 years in the area.

"I really like Cottage Grove," she said. "I'm actually surprised how much I like Cottage Grove."

Things didn't begin this way, however. Growing up in a small New Jersey town of 10,000 people, Nguyen was at first apprehensive of fully engaging the community after moving here.

"I kind of assumed people would do a lot of gossiping because I saw that before and I was just very cautious," she said.

Then she noticed a ten-

dency for people to smile as they walked down the street or passed her by, which she initially found to be somewhat off-putting.

"But after a couple weeks, I was like, 'I think they're just nice,'" she laughed. "I had also lived in big cities, so maybe I just had a different viewpoint."

Since then, her relationship with Cottage Grove has blossomed.

Eight years ago, Nguyen established what would become the local landmark game store Delight downtown and also developed an afterschool program for

youngsters.

Her nexus point in the heart of downtown opened the door for interactions with a variety of people.

"It's a neat community because there's all kinds of people," she said. "There's hippies and there's people who have lived here their whole lives and there's loggers and there are people who shoot their dinner. ... And they talk to each other."

The openness to root out deeper connections with community members was a characteristic that stuck with Nguyen.

"It was just really unique. I had never seen that before," she said. "That's one of the things I like about this town — people are very approachable and really down to earth regardless of what their jobs are."

With the town's own character acting as inspiration, Nguyen hopes to reproduce the experience through her project.

"What I want, when you see the art show or the artbook, is you can walk away and think, 'This is what it's like to be another human living in the community.' And maybe we can learn

something about ourselves through it," she said. "I think it's really perfect timing because people feel so divided and I don't think they need to feel that way. I think that we're just so focused on those one or two aspects where we're not really seeing eye to eye. But there's so much more about a person that goes beyond that and it would be nice to have something like that to feel reinvigorated as a community."

Though much of the project is conceptually there, Nguyen is still in an exploratory mode.

"I want to approach it like an experiment in a sense," she said. "I want to be a natural process so I'm not forcing ideas on it."

To accomplish the task, Nguyen plans to enlist the help of community members to volunteer as subjects through her public Facebook page "Art by UTN."

With dozens of art pieces ahead of her, she anticipates the portrait production to last through December and hopes to culminate the project with exhibitions next spring in local museums, galleries, libraries or other public spaces.

Nguyen's art is on view this month in the "Around Oregon Annual" at The Arts Center in Corvallis and at The Axe and Fiddle in Cottage Grove.

A Virtual Awards Ceremony will be held Tuesday, Aug. 18, beginning at 4 p.m. and streaming on Lane Arts Council Facebook page.

# SUPPORT

# LOCAL NEWS



**SUBSCRIBE. DONATE. ADVERTISE.**

During times of crisis, crucial information about your community comes from local reporters.

Access to high quality information is essential. Especially local information. And especially now. What's happening in our communities? What's the impact? How are our local leaders responding? For answers to these questions, we rely on the hard work of our local reporters. As a result, readership of local news outlets has reached record highs.

But due to COVID-19, most local news publications are losing money, fast. Advertising has plummeted during the crisis and readers aren't subscribing fast enough to fill the void. This has led to thousands of local reporters being laid off. Just as our society faces numerous, urgent challenges.

Millions of people are in danger of losing access to the authoritative local

information they need to stay informed. That's why the Local Media Association and the Local Media Consortium are working with local news providers to build a strong future for local journalism. And that's why our long-time partner Google is purchasing ads like this in local publications across the country, as well as providing a Relief Fund to help struggling local news outlets. But those actions alone aren't enough.

Please consider supporting the local news organizations you rely on. Subscribe to them. Donate to them. And if you have a business that's able to, advertise with them. **Your support is critical to sustaining the dedicated journalists serving your communities.**

Our local news outlets help keep us safer. Let's help keep them open.

This message supported by



Subscribe: [www.cgsentinel.com/subscribe](http://www.cgsentinel.com/subscribe)