

ARTS & CULTURE

Arts apprenticeship finds a home base at Opal Center



COURTESY PHOTO

Dali, one of the winter 2021 students in Heather Greene's cohort stands in front a detailed fantasy elephant watercolor presentation. Dali's presentation was featured in the window of The Crafty Mercantile.

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The Lane Arts Council's Design Arts Apprenticeship program has been running in Lane County since its inception but this year will be the first time a location

in Cottage Grove will be a part of the program. The Opal Center for Arts and Education will host mentors and students this year as the Cottage Grove expansion gets underway.

The Opal Center was "an accessible and large enough space," said Michele Rose,

executive director of the Opal Center and owner of The Crafty Mercantile.

This year's program offers multiple opportunities for students in middle and high school to participate with virtual and in-person options. Since students usually gather in groups of 3-4

with a mentor, it's possible to maintain safe practices while providing in-person activities.

The 10-week apprenticeship lasts from Sept. 22 to Dec. 3, with the final showcase of students' work on Dec. 3, according to the Lane Arts Council's website.

Mentors may choose to work in the field and explore the outdoors with students but the Opal Center will be a meeting place, and the window display will be used to showcase final projects, said Rose.

Participants in the program are also encouraged to use a variety of mediums and offered guidance on how to create professional portfolios and correspond with people in certain fields professionally.

One of the featured mentors for Cottage Grove is Heather Greene, who will be focusing on biomimicry, which is the practice of observing wild organisms and emulating their abstract functions in man-made designs.

"I love working with middle and high school students because they're changemakers... and especially right now they're so eager to have that tool to make those changes and to really make a difference and I see biomimicry as that tool," said Greene.

Greene has been making

art since middle school. Her art has shifted over the years from metalworking and welding to sculpting to poetry and writing to arts and crafts with her kids. She became more aware of biomimicry after seeing a TED talk by the pioneer of the concept she said, a woman named Janine Beynus. As a strong believer in protecting the environment, Greene saw it as an opportunity to learn more. Now she's about to graduate with an MS in biomimicry at Arizona State University.

She became involved with the apprenticeship program back in winter of 2021 and is glad to be back working with kids, and empowering them to create.

"That is really what I want to achieve, empowered and informed people [of all ages] that are reconnected and ready to take on an uncertain future that requires innovative, informed thinking to change the paradigm and bring the built and natural world back from the brink of extinction," said Greene.

New stops added to South Willamette Food Trail

The South Willamette Valley Food Trail, launched in April 2019, has several new locations and is ready to be explored this fall.

Developed through Travel Oregon's Oregon Food Trail Program, the South Willamette Valley Food Trail gives locals and visitors an opportunity to experience world-class wines, wild fields and foods and family friendly farms.

A few new stops along the food trail include the 3-Legged Crane Pub & Brewhouse in Oakridge, where one can find traditional English cask ales.

Cottage Grove has several new food and beverage businesses, and the trail also features new farm

stands at Fox Springs Farm in Eugene and My Brothers' Farm in Creswell.

All the stops along these food trails are committed to thoughtful and sustainable practices. Here are some of the things to can expect:

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Hip, rustic and forward-thinking restaurants, bakeries and cafés serving 33% or more local ingredients on menu items

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Destination Development Manager, Jeff Malik, noted, "residents and visitors will be treated to unique experiences and learn about the bounty our region offers.

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