

ENTERTAINMENT

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Artists share their talent at EXCEED Art Show



A huge variety of art styles are on display at the second annual EXCEED Art Show at the Hemet Public Library, March 28.

Valley News/Diane A. Rhodes photos

Diane A. Rhodes
Special to Valley News

For the second year in a row, the successful Art in the Park project for adults with disabilities who are part of the nonprofit EXCEED programs culminated in an art show at the Hemet Public Library, March 28. For three hours, the artists shared their works that were gleaned from a full year of classes.

EXCEED, which offers several programs to provide advocacy, educational, vocational, job placement services and life skills training, was established in 1979. The Art in the Park project began in 2021 through a successful City of Hemet Community Development Block Grant.

The purpose of the project is to provide a meaningful art experience for adults with disabilities and to foster inspiration, community integration and good health. Art also provides a viable way of expressing emotions and feelings, especially when someone can't do so through traditional means.

Art facilitator Nancy Espensen enjoys helping participants unlock their creativity through the program that promotes the belief that everyone has the potential to use art materials and to be creative and expressive. She teaches about nine classes per month that encompass clients from the Community Integrated Services, Exploration & Enrichment Services and Adult Development Center programs.

"I feel I am the most fortunate person in the whole world to have this job," Espensen said. After working with a local youth organization for eight years, she was happy to be given the opportunity to work with adults, which she had always wanted to do. During the pandemic, EXCEED clients were at home and were looking for something to do outdoors, which is when Art in the Park was born. Espensen was very pleased to be the artist they chose to facilitate the lessons.

She prepares materials for 30 participants at each session and said it sometimes takes more than one class to complete a particular project. Regarding how in depth she gets with art history, she said it varies with each artist they are learning about.

"If the artist has a great story, that will depend on how engaged they become. For instance, Yayoi Kusama is 95 and still creating amazing art," Espensen said. The Japanese contemporary artist, sometimes called "The Princess



Artist Scott Ferrell shares his Yayoi Kusama inspired flower still life.



Nicole Yoder's "Lines & Landscapes" creation is one of many art pieces she is proud to display at the second annual EXCEED Art Show.

of Polka Dots," inspired their "Flower Still Life" paintings. Clients worked with primary colors using tempera paint to put down a vase for the background table and background of their dot flowers. They then used a marker to add petals and different dimensions to their composition. Lastly, they added more polka dots to finish their Kusama masterpieces.

"I show them a video or show examples of the artist's work," Espensen said. "With Pinterest and YouTube, there is a lot you can find online these days."

Classes focus on different artists or techniques each session and Espensen takes the time to share the particular style of art and/or some background on the artists themselves before asking her class to create their own works of art to emulate the style. This year's

show featured 32 different well-known artists or art styles, offering a wide array of techniques, colors and mediums.

Friends Nicole Yoder and Elaine Morris were happy to see guests enjoying their compositions. Scott Ferrell got involved with the art program for the first time this past year and said, "it's cool" and plans to continue.

Dean Shrader was one of the featured artists again this year and stood by his stencil of "Dubai at Night" that was displayed on an easel. Behind it was a wall containing the works created by other artists for the session on "Moments in Nature" where they used stencils on paper and dot markers to apply color.

Gerardo Avellaneda was happy to explain the detailed process he used to create his two Dale



The Henri Rousseau inspired "Tigers in the Jungle" is the result of mixed media collages made by several artists.



This "Paper Relief" project, with input from 18 clients, had participants using scrap paper pieces and remnants from other projects.

Chihuly Inspired Hearts pieces. He said his favorite art classes are those that involve sculpting.

Michael Arellanes made "Clay Textured Tiles" of Mickey Mouse

and Olaf (from Frozen) as well as a clay textured turtle. Some students also created watercolor

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turtle paintings that were inspired by a visit to the Temecula Duck Pond. Being blind, Arellanes didn't think he would like art since it was pretty much new to him but after attending an Art in the Park session, he was hooked. "I hope it stays around," he said.

Kelli Watson was most proud of "The Whimsy Collage" she created. Clients were given access to collage supplies, which are scraps from other projects and background papers, and were tasked to create whatever they wanted. "I really liked doing this," she said. "I like the art classes; I like keeping my mind going and doing new things." Watson also said she appreciates all the new ideas that Espensen comes up with on a regular basis.

Title sponsors for the Art Show, which took several months to organize with a lot of help, were the City of Hemet and the Soboba Foundation. Lowe's Home Improvement and photographer Gina Diaz were silver sponsors for the event. Guests enjoyed refreshments, charcuterie board style, while they socialized.

Sandra Aldridge, who oversees Marketing & Resource Development for EXCEED, said one of her favorite art projects was "Hot Dogs & Cool Cats." Clients reviewed warm and cool colors and found it interesting that colors have a temperature. Based on their own favorite color, they could be a hot or cool character. Using water-soluble oil pastels, they colored in the dogs and cats they had drawn with a black marker. They then "painted with water" to create a watercolor effect.

Kathy Bloom-Rudibaugh has been a member of EXCEED's Board of Directors for more than 10 years. "It's such a lovely organization that does a lot of good work in an area that is often neglected." She said the art program is phenomenal and wouldn't exist if clients weren't excited to participate. One of her favorite displays at the show was the salute to Joan Miró, where clients created cat paintings in the style of Miro who had a unique style. His works featured brilliant colors, simplified forms, symbols and dream-like images that remind people of children's art. Bloom-Rudibaugh had seen a Joan Miró exhibit on a visit to the Guggenheim Museum.

"Nancy does such a good job, providing a personal investment and appreciation of the artists," Bloom-Rudibaugh, of Hemet, said. She has been all over Europe and visited many museums to view exhibits and was delighted with the way this art show was set up. "All the artwork they did is amazing, and I love seeing how proud they are of what they've accomplished, and rightfully so," Bloom-Rudibaugh said.

Other well-known artists that were discussed and whose styles were brought to life throughout the twice-weekly sessions were Paul Klee, Georgia O'Keefe, Henri Rousseau, David Smith and Natasha Wescoat. In addition, clients were introduced to pop-art, batik and abstract methods as well as a wide variety of mediums from chalk pastels to alcohol ink pens.

Hemet City Manager Mark Prestwich said he was looking forward to this year's show after seeing some of the pieces from last year's show on display at City



Elaine Morris is the featured artist for the "Whimsical Trees" display, where clients explored how to use lines to create abstract and whimsical trees. At right are some of the "Hot Dogs & Cool Cats" paintings. Valley News/Diane A. Rhodes photos



Artist Gerardo Avellaneda, left, shares Dale Chihuly inspired "Hearts" with Hemet City Manager Mark Prestwich and City Council Member Linda Krupa.



"The Whimsy Collage" project was a favorite for Kelli Watson, shown with one of her art pieces.



Clients used melted crayons on muslin fabric for their creative "Crayon Batik" creations.



Michael Arellanes stands next to his clay textured turtle at the second annual EXCEED Art Show at the Hemet Public Library, March 28.

Hall. "EXCEED does such a good service to the community; they need to be recognized," he said. "I'm very impressed with how significant this display is and how the artists were challenged with different themes and styles."

San Jacinto High School Assis-

tant Principal Bill Powell said his daughter is a client of EXCEED and loves art. "I love this event as I have spent my career working with students with disabilities and it's a chance for them to showcase their abilities," he said. "I have former students and my own daughter

who presented their artwork at the show. I had several pieces that I thought were excellent but honestly, I love all of them because these artists put their hearts into creating them to the best of their ability."

For those interested in supporting the Art in the Park program,

donations can be mailed to EXCEED at 1285 N. Santa Fe Ave., Hemet, CA 92543 or made on the website by using PayPal. Either way, a note in the memo area should specify Art in the Park. For more information, www.wexceed.org or #EXCEEDARTSHOW2024.



"Follow Your Heart" is the title of this project that had artists making compilation pieces expressing their love and appreciation for the spirit of creativity.



Artists are congratulated for their creativity at the EXCEED Art Show, March 28. From left, Hemet Mayor Joe Males, artists Gerardo Avellaneda, Christina Powell and Brian Calderon, Art Facilitator Nancy Espensen and featured artist Dean Shrader.

Temecula to celebrate Earth Day

Kim Harris
Special to Valley News

Temecula will host a celebration recognizing both Earth Day and Arbor Day Saturday, April 20, at Sam Hicks Monument Park, the city announced in a news release last week.

Scheduled from 9-11 a.m., the free community event will include family-friendly activities, ceremonial tree planting and light refreshments.

"The city of Temecula proudly recognizes these annual days of observance to promote the importance of trees in our lives, encourage tree planting and care and protect our environment and natural resources for future generations," the city said.

The city encouraged residents to explore the trees in their neighborhoods and "appreciate all the benefits they bring to our daily lives" by utilizing the city's interactive tree map which can be found online at <http://www.temeculaca.gov/trees>.

"Let your inner arborist flourish this year," the city said. Sam Hicks Monument Park is located at 41970 Moreno Road in Temecula.

For more information on the upcoming Earth & Arbor Day Celebration and other future Temecula Community Services Department signature events, visit <http://www.temeculaca.gov/Events> or follow @TemeculaParksAndRec on Instagram and Facebook.