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OCEAN VIEW Julia Anthony hand paints a seascape mural at the Civic Center Library. *Photo by Promise Yee*

Mural sparks young readers' imaginations

By Promise Yee

OCEANSIDE — Kelp bar fish, garibaldi and sheepshead fish are beginning to fill the walls of the children's story corner at the Civic Center Library as Julia Anthony paints a sea life mural to inspire young readers. The colorful oceanscape covers two walls in the children's library with local and tropical marine life. "It focuses on native marine life and transitions into broader tropical sea life like the hawksbill turtle, clown triggerfish, leafy sea dragon, coral starfish," Anthony said.

Anthony hopes the mural will inspire children to learn more about local and global sea life and practice environmental stewardship.

"I try to capture people's attention through the beauty of what they are looking at not just the art technique," Anthony said. "When they look at the clownfish or leafy seadragon and are mesmerized by the beauty of it, I hope the emotion, the wow, will evoke the desire in people to take care of what we have."

Anthony began work on the mural in February, a month before the library reopened in March following a \$600,000 renovation.

Library patrons can see the mural painting in progress. Anthony hand paints the mural eight hours a day, six days a week.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for the community to watch me create the artwork, especially children," Anthony said. "Seeing an artist is a perfect opportunity for children to think about art."

To help pintsize patrons learn more about sea life, presenters from the Birch Aquarium Scripps Institute of Oceanography will give an educational puppet show on April 12.

Anthony will also be there to answer questions about her artwork in progress. She said she expects the mural will be completed in May. She will also construct children's furniture for the story corner in sea life shapes.

The mural is funded by the Oceanside Public Library Foundation.

Anthony also painted the African savannah mural at the Escondido Public Library. The "Wild Beauty of the Savannahs" mural covers three walls with African wildlife and an entryway with apes from the tropical rain-forest.

Anthony received formal art training at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Art in Philadelphia. She has always worked as an artist and recently made art her full-time career.