

Artwork sends a powerful message

October 30, 2021



The Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness presented the work of Julie Smiley and her multimedia exhibit entitled “We Are Worthy” at the Del Norte County Courthouse on Oct. 26.

Standing in front of several artworks that ranged from soft pastel-colored affirmation messages that people could tear and take away with them, to unpredictable and darker watercolors meant to convey acceptance, Smiley explained that each piece of art started with a 20-minute meditation as a way to capture and convey resilience.

Smiley’s work was inspired by her work with domestic violence survivors at Crescent City’s Harrington House.

“When you put wet paint on wet paper, it’s fascinating to see where the colors go,” explained Smiley, while she pointed towards a vibrant and three-dimensional piece of art using different hues of blue. “It’s reminiscent of ‘Where am I going next?’”

The art piece that invited visitors to take a tug at it - allowing them to leave with a message of affirmation - will morph and change, reflecting a similar metamorphosis of the survivors of domestic violence.

“Mine says ‘You are worthy’,” said Stephanie La Torre, the host of the event and executive director of the DNACA.

Other torn strips were more specific, as people read out loud “I am worthy of safety” and “I am worthy of love.”

Smiley said that she worked with the theme of “resilience” to create her original works, adding that one of the greatest parts of her personal healing was recognition, and “when I began to tell my story others said ‘Yes, I believe it,’” she said.

Smiley’s project was funded through a grant from the Fund for Artists’ Resilience and was awarded through DNACA, Ink People and Humboldt Area Foundation. Her work is on display through November 18, as part of DNACA’s Art in Public Places program, and can be viewed in the lobby of the Del Norte County Courthouse, 450 H Street, Crescent City. The courthouse is open Monday - Friday, from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. except on holidays.