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Lafayette artist donates time and talent; paints mural at Rec Center

By Pippa Fisher



Artist Mandy Tardif puts the finishing touches on the mural she is donating to the Lafayette Recreation Center's Kindergym room. Photo Pippa Fisher

The Kindergym room at the Lafayette Community Center has a new look in the entrance area - a local artist has donated time and talent to create a beautiful butterfly mural that is designed to suggest freedom and movement as the children come in.

It all started as a contest. Former Lafayette resident and artist Mandy Tardif decided to donate her artistic skills to a randomly selected winner. Through social media and word of mouth, Tardif invited parents to email her a photo of their space that they wanted decorated. She asked for the age of the child and an idea of what they envision for the space. On July 31 Tardif put the names in a hat and pulled out the winner . and it was none other than the community center whose request was submitted by the city's recreation coordinator, Tricia Young.

The mural is designed to stimulate childhood imagination. With the butterfly deliberately at child-height, kids stand against it, stretching their arms out.

"We are so excited that Mandy chose our program to donate a mural to," says Young. "The butterfly is so welcoming and bright and children have loved to stand next to it and pretend to be a butterfly. It fits so perfectly and will prompt children's imaginations."

Tardif, who has a degree in graphic design, says she has been painting since she was 3 years old. Born in Alaska, she grew up in New Hampshire and moved to California in 2001.

It is through painting, she says, that she has found her voice. Tardif is open about her struggles with an eating disorder and with alcohol and drugs. She says art has been transformative for her.

"Art was my therapy," she says. It was through a process of 12 paintings - a series she calls "Divine Liberations" - that she found expression. "It was a journey for me," she says.

Although Tardif has suffered from chronic pain for the past 14 years caused by nerve damage to the spine, she also works as a personal trainer.

Tardif says she likes to work on her paintings in local coffee shops, especially Philz in Lafayette, where she is known simply as "the painter." She says she loves that people come up to her and get talking. In fact she has undertaken several commissioned paintings that way.

Tardif has done many portraits including pet portraits in addition to murals.

"I want my butterfly mural to suggest movement, play and freedom," she says.

To learn more about the artist or to see examples of her work, visit her website: www.mandytardif.com/

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