

'Pallet'-Able Art still a popular public project

By Christine Peets

It started with six pallets; now there are 18 and the 'Pallet'-Able Art project continues to be a very popular one—and a boost to arts and culture in the Town of Greater Napanee.

"We are thrilled with the growth in popularity of this and it's wonderful to see so many artists, local businesses and organizations, and residents getting involved," said Tim Nimigan, who co-chairs the Arts and Culture committee for the Town. "We've ordered 10 more pallets, so that will bring us up to 30. Right now, most of the 18 are in the town's core area but we hope to expand and have more in the outlying areas of Greater Napanee within the next year or so."

This public art project uses specially designed industrial wooden pallets (skids) that are pre-treated and primed for the artists. Once they are completed and a sponsor found, then they are installed throughout the municipality. Installation has been from mid-May to early November for most of the pallets but there were two left out for the winter at the Waterfront Riverfront Pub & Terrace.

"That seemed to work well, so we will talk to them and perhaps see if there are others than can be left out year-round," Tim said. "It will depend on the location and how protected the pallets would be from the winter weather."

While Tim has been a driving force with this project, and has created and painted his own pallets, he says it was the support of Lyndsay Tee, Economic Development Co-ordinator for the Town of Greater Napanee, the rest of the Arts and Culture committee, and the Town council, for the success of the project.

"Lyndsay did a great job with the artists and the sponsors, and now that work is being done by Annie Manion while Lyndsay is on maternity leave."

Annie has her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree so she says working on this project is a fun part of her job. "I am really looking forward to being able to get more of the pallets installed throughout the community. It's been especially good working with the sponsors."

One of those sponsors is Drain-All Ltd, a company committed to environmental issues. So it is fitting that the pallet done by artist Peggy Collins is named, "Protecting the Environment" and is located beside the Napanee River.

"We were introduced to the art project by Deputy Mayor Marg Isbester and as we are always looking for ways to support the community, this was a good project for us," says company representative Stephen Huza. "Protecting the various species painted by Peggy on our pallet: the beaver, the dragon flies, the birds, flowers is a wonderful concept. The art, the location and the environmental concept make a strong triangle of value, so we are very pleased with the results. We are supporting the arts, the environment, the community and this brings awareness to Drain-All's mission [of protecting the environment.]"

Peggy Collins said that coming up with the right concept for the sponsor took a few months but then the actual work came together fairly quickly even though she does not work with acrylics very often.

“I had a personal deadline to meet, and once we had the right design that everyone was happy with, it was fun working on this, and the other pallet that I did,” she said. “I am down here [by the river] quite often with my children, so this is an important area to protect.”

Bringing awareness to the sponsor’s values was particularly important to the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario, Napanee Branch, who asked Barbara Marlin, a retired teacher, to design and paint a pallet for them.

“We’d read about the project and wanted to be involved, and support the arts this way,” said Marg Baldwin, president of the local group.

“After retiring from teaching my interest turned to creative arts and painting. It was an honour when the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario (RWTO), Napanee Branch, approached me to design and paint a pallet that the organization would sponsor,” Barbara said. “In designing the pallet I drew from the symbols of teaching and learning: Children starting out on life’s journey of education in an ever-expanding world of knowledge.”

The location of the pallet was also important. It could have been at a school, but which one? So when it was suggested that the Napanee branch of the Lennox & Addington County libraries might be interested, it was a natural fit.

“We’ve had the Art in the Library project running for a while at the Napanee Branch and would have supported any pallet but to have this one, which fits so well with what we do educationally, is so relevant,” says Catherine Coles, manager of the library services for the County.

While there are various organizations and businesses sponsoring the pallets, as well as individuals, one of the caveats is that the pallets be visible to the public even if they are on privately-owned property. The pallets at the Napanee Veterinary Hospital, Shellin Pools, and the Cornerstone Christian Academy are examples of how this is bringing the arts to the community.

“We are trying to have as many pallets in various parts of the community as possible and we really want this to fulfill the public art mandate that we started with,” said Annie Manion. “Our 20th anniversary pallet, marking the creation of the Town of Greater Napanee, after the town and local townships were amalgamated in 1998, will be on display at various community events, and we want those townships to have their own pallets, so we are working on that.”

Finding the pallets is easy by visiting the ‘Pallet’-Able Art page on the Town of Greater Napanee’s interactive website, <https://www.greaternapanee.com/en/live-play-and-discover/-pallet-able-art-program.aspx>. There, you will find an interactive map that gives the location and information about each of the pallets, and the artists.

“When we envisioned this, we never thought it would be what it is now, and it’s wonderful to see how much it’s expanded,” Tim Nimigan said. “We think it’s really showing the arts and culture available in Greater Napanee.”

Photo information:

Artist Peggy Collins, "Protecting the Environment", pallet located in Springside Park, Greater Napanee. Sponsored by Drain All Ltd. Photo by Christine Peets

Cornerstone Christian Academy students representing all students who helped create "God Said...And It Was So," by artist Debbie Nimigan. Photo by Tim Nimigan

Artist Barbara Marlin, "School Days" pallet located at the Napanee branch of the L & A County Library, Photo supplied by Town of Greater Napanee. (2 photos)

Artist Jackie Adams, "Happiness Is..." photo with Dr. Ewen Ferguson, and friends, Napanee Veterinary Hospital (sponsor and location). Photo supplied by Tim Nimigan

"Come on in..The Water's Fine", sponsor and location, Shellin Pools, artist, Tim Nimigan. Photo supplied by Tim Nimigan