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Students and disabled adults create crafts for 1st Annual Peace and Kindness Carnival

By Jenn Freedman



Students help each other make beaded bracelets.

Photo Jenn Freedman

The local nonprofit Mindful Littles brought together 10 disabled adults from Las Trampas School in Lafayette and 22 students from Carondelet High School in Concord Oct. 10 to create mindful crafts, like beaded bracelets, lavender sachets, and painted pots, which will be sold at a Peace and Kindness Carnival on Veterans Day at Orinda Community Park.

Tanuka Gordon, founder of Mindful Littles, explained the inspiration for this partnership: "My own 11-year friendship with a woman who has cerebral palsy has been the inspiration for creating more and more organic opportunities between people who have special needs and those who do not. There is nothing more powerful than the beautiful expression of love and inclusion that can naturally emerge when you bring such groups together."

Integrating these groups was a natural extension of their existing partnerships with the nonprofit already: Carondelet has been working closely with Mindful Littles's youth leadership program, and the school had specifically offered up students to volunteer with the organization as part of their Day of Service program on this particular day in October. In addition, Mindful Littles has an ongoing program with Las Trampas, teaching yoga and mindfulness at the school for developmentally disabled adult students every Friday. The weekly yoga class at Las Trampas is now open to the public as well. This experience lends itself to a natural opportunity for opening up a diversity dialogue with

children at home.

Initially, both the Carondelet and Las Trampas students felt unsure of what to expect when they gathered to make the crafts. But as soon as they began working together, both groups were naturally helping each other. "Quite honestly, I was moved to tears as I saw the students help each other, laugh, share stories. By the end of the morning, the groups were eating lunch together and even gave each other high-fives and hugs before they left. If we can create more and more of these immersion opportunities, our world would start looking like a different place," Gordon said.

The crafts will be sold at the First Annual Peace and Kindness Carnival, a fundraiser for Mindful Littles. Its mission is to spark children and families to engage in mindful, compassionate action through service learning experiences, creative yoga and mindfulness programs, and heartfelt parenting resources. Mindful Littles is a small and fast-growing nonprofit, and fundraising has become a critical need to enable long-term sustainability.

The carnival will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mon., Nov. 12 at Orinda Community Park and will include a live band, bouncy house, face painting, balloon artist, kindness games, carnival games, food trucks, and a chance to meet and help real veterans on Veterans day. Tickets are \$40 per child, free for adults and children under 2. For tickets, go to mindfullittles.org and click the upcoming events tab.

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WHEN: Thursday, November 8, 2018 from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

WHERE: At the Heather Farm Community Center Club Room 301 N. San Carlos Dr., Walnut Creek. Next to the Lake at Heather Farm Park.

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Holiday magic at the Moraga Art Gallery

By Sophie Braccini



Work by ceramist Donna Arganbright on display
Photos Sophie Braccini

The quaint art gallery in Moraga's Rheem Shopping Center has curated for the end of the year a show that combines beautiful objects, unique jewelry and diverse paintings. Always driven by a need to create uniqueness, the artists present a wide palette for art aficionados and people looking to give their loved ones – or themselves – something that will endure as a testimony of human creativity.

The show, "Holiday Magic in Porcelain and Paint," will be on display through Jan. 5. The two featured artists are plein-air painter Maria SantoStefano and ceramist Donna Arganbright.

SantoStefano's work captures the light and shade, and the colors of Northern California landscape. Her compositions often feature a pastoral scene that include some type of building, barn or old house, and expose brilliant gradients of reds, greens, blues and earthy tones on display as seasons change. A student of Anne Marie Glover and Pam Glover, the affiliation is certainly recognizable, but SantoStefano adds a boldness and creativity all her own.

Where SantoStefano offers beauty and dream, Arganbright and her ceramics bring humor and color into everyday objects. Her bowls, pitchers, mugs or trays are a charming way to bring the special and

unique into our world. SantoStefano's technique is flawless, the shapes she creates are harmonious and the colors are vibrant without being aggressive.

The gallery also features the creations of several other notable local artists in many different genres.

One of them is Jyotsna Singh, the granddaughter of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala who said she inherited her grandfather's passion for jewelry. She brings to the Moraga Art Gallery a limited edition of her new Manjusha collection that was designed for the Legion of Honor Museum gift shop. The elements of the collection available in Moraga are of exquisite craftsmanship, with a definitely modern East-meets-West flavor. The earrings, necklaces and bracelets are beautifully detailed yet easy to wear everyday. The reasonable pricing will make it an simple choice as a gift.

Many other artists worthy of consideration will attract the attention of visitors. Anna W. Edwards from San Leandro has several mesmerizing abstract paintings on display inspired by sunsets that the painter experienced all over the world. K. de Groot jewelry, creations often based on antique Asian pieces are also on display, including some new works by the artist that demonstrate her talent for balance and discriminatory elegance.

George Ehrenhaft's watercolors, inspired by the local scene or Yosemite, always bring a sense to calm poetry and soft happiness, while Pam Murray's creative collage energizes the whole gallery.

The gallery located at 522 Center St, close to T.J. Maxx is open from noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. For more information, visit at moragaartgallery.com.



Collage by Pam Murray

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