

Historic school turns art gallery

Lexi Baines
Citizen

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An old school has become a gallery as part of a long-running fundraising effort.

The Cowichan Station Area Association is dressing up what has become its new community centre - the historic Cowichan Station School - in a unique fashion as the boarded-up windows are replaced with original pieces of art.

For almost a century, that school played a central role for the south end community until its closure in 2007.

In partnership with the Cowichan Valley Regional District and School District 79, the Cowichan Station Area Association is transforming this historic building and more than 20 artists from across the Cowichan Valley have volunteered their talents, turning pieces of plywood into beautiful outdoor art, which are being offered for sale.

The one-of-a kind pieces have been installed over the building's currently boarded-up windows.

They will remain for the month, turning the centre into a free outdoor gallery.

People can enjoy the art and then place a bid to own a piece. Suzan Kostiuick, CSAA volunteer and a member of the Cowichan Valley Arts Council, is excited about the project.

"This is an adventure in art. What a unique venue, and what a unique opportunity to showcase of some of our Valley's finest artists," she said.



CREDIT: Lexi Baines, Citizen
Students and artists like Jacob Hokanson (above) are working together to help the Cowichan Station Area Association raise the funds needed to replace the Hub's gym roof, fix up the kitchen and more.

If you can't get to the Hub, you will also be able to enjoy the art and find out how you can bid at cowichanstation.org, the CSAA's own website.

The idea for this project came from a quick conversation between Kostiuck and Jill Thompson, a director of the CSAA, and fundraising committee chair.

"We started talking about how to bring life to the boarded up building. It needed something to make it look inviting and we needed to raise some money to do it," Thompson said. "There is a ton of activity here, but you'd never know it by looking at these boarded up windows."

Contributors include accomplished artists who have created pieces especially for this charity sale, students and parents of the former Cowichan Station School, and children who look forward to having a local place to play.

The effort is part of an ambitious plan that coincides with the school's 100th birthday, just a few years away in 2014.

Replacing the gym roof will start soon, and there are plans to renovate the kitchen, replace the oil heating system with a geothermal system and finally, restore the flat roof on the old school building to its historic double pitch design.

It is estimate the entire project will cost \$1.3 million and grants, local donations, business support, and volunteer efforts have the Association almost halfway to its goal.

Funds from this event will go directly to uncovering the original hand-poured window panes, and making repairs to them if that's needed.

When the last piece is sold, the CSAA will take the boards off the windows and let the light shine in the historic building again.

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