



Ryan Berry | Daily Advocate

The Art in the Darke Quilt Exhibit created by Mississinawa Valley art students is finally on display after COVID put a halt to the plans in 2020. Shown with the display are Sierra Grim, Lilly Severance and Ashley Austerman.

Art in the Darke Quilt Exhibit on display

By Ryan Berry
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GREENVILLE — A day that has been in the making for over three years finally came to fruition on Wednesday, May 10. Wayne HealthCare hosted the Art in the Darke Quilt Exhibit

in the Harrison Street Lobby of the hospital.

In early 2020, Mississinawa Valley students from Ashley Austerman's art class were given a project to build several quilts. Their inspiration came from a tour of Wayne HealthCare.

Terri Flood, vice president of business development and marketing, worked with Kate Gorman who was an artist in residence at Mississinawa Valley Schools. Through her and Austerman, and with the support of the hospital, the students were given a

tour of the hospital and its different areas from where they could draw inspiration.

As with everything in the early part of 2020, it all came to a screeching halt. Students and their

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teachers weren't sure how they were going to be able to complete the project, but the students showed resilience. Because this was their final project for the school year, many of the students were forced to work on it from home. Originally, volunteers from the hospital were going to put the quilt pieces on the backing, but the pandemic made Austerman, Gorman and the students shift gears. Gorman eventually helped complete the project for the students.

With the exception of one of the pieces, the quilts are very healthcare oriented. The largest piece features Wayne HealthCare from its first building to its latest addition. One of the artists that helped work on that piece was on-hand for the celebration. Lilly Severance, a senior at Mississinawa Valley, was a freshman when they worked on this project. She pointed out the final addition of the hospital was not built when they finished the quilt. "We started in hopes of what the building was going to look like, and I think we displayed it pretty accurately." Severance plans on attending Ball State University to pursue her dream of becoming an art teacher.

Another student present for the celebration was Sierra Grim. Grim is also a senior at the school and this project had a huge impact on her. She knew she wanted to be a surgeon when she toured the hospital in 2020, but with her quilt, It's Okay, she wanted to emphasize and bring an awareness and reassurance that these are skilled individuals, and they will take care of you.

This was the first of three big projects Austerman brought to her art classes. These projects were more than creating art for a grade. It was creating art that will last. It was also teaching students how to work together and taking chances. Even for Austerman, the project made an impact on her as a teacher. She said, "After I did this project, I'm not scared to take on different projects like this. It's kind of scary

to take on this task because you don't know the outcome of something like this." She added that these are hard projects because there is a threat of failure. "It gave us an opportunity to do something at a high risk because it is hard to do stuff like this because there comes failure, and you don't want to fail."

The other lesson that is learned through these projects is leadership. "If they don't have those leadership opportunities, they are never going to develop those skills unless they have opportunities in other places. Some students do and some students don't have tasks where they can step out of their box and take the leadership role," said Austerman.

Lauren Henry, director of the Wayne Hospital Foundation, praised the students for their work. "You came in and were inspired by us." She added the display has been up for less than a week and many people have stopped and looked

at it. "You guys are doing what art is supposed to do in a community. It's inspirational," said Henry.

The display will now be part of the Darke County Art Trail, which features visual art across the county. The quilts will be on display at the Mississinawa Valley Art Show this week and will be making stops at a few other places before coming back to Wayne HealthCare. Henry, speaking for Andrea Jordan, executive director of the Darke County Center for the Arts, said, "They (DCCA) are proud to bring this to the community through this initiative. DCCA expands fulfillment of the mission of cultural enrichment by providing new and unique visual art experiences while also celebrating public art already here in Darke County."

Other pieces on the Art in the Darke Quilt Exhibit includes Love Strength, Faith and Hope, Breathe, Cancer Ribbons, New Beginnings and Greenville.

In addition to Severance and Grim, artists included Xochitl Lozano-Licona, Mallory Flesher, Ava Stump, Joceyln Hoggatt, Noemi Arrona, Dylan Pollic, Duane Husted, Lance Bowers, Alison Byram, Caleb Carrico, Elias Levesque, Caitlyn Hains, Braxton Hampshire, Emma

Hart, Jameson Hummel, Keearra Jones, Madelynn Hiestand, Travis Fugate, Caleb Purdin, Ethan Setser, Bree-Anna Beam, Alexander Jenkinson and Abigail Green.

The other large projects completed by Mississinawa Valley art classes include the mural located near

downtown Union City and a large light projection project that was shown in the gymnasium.

For more information on the Darke County Art Trail, visit <https://www.darkecountyarts.org/art-trail>.

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