



West Valley VIEW

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Getting to the art of the matter

Arts opportunities expand at Estrella Mountain Community College

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KATHLEEN MILLER, 19, sketches a cartoon-like fish at Estrella Mountain Community College where she takes a drawing class.

Visitors at Tiburon aquarium restaurant at Wildlife World Zoo will be greeted by exotic marine life, along with works of art produced by local college students.

The art program at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale is branching out to offer students more opportunities for exposure.

Amy Ronhovde, a new art instructor on campus, said she couldn't be happier.

"I am a very proactive person. I want to give my students as much opportunity as possible to get their work out to the public," she said. "Being an artist, you can have a viable career."

Ronhovde's students submitted artwork for the school's literary magazine and to a New York show called "Postcards from the Edge," held their first art show on campus and have now put pieces up at the aquarium restaurant.

"It's just the beginning," the teacher said. "We want the art program to have a real presence on campus."

The school's art show was successful and drew a good crowd, Ronhovde said.

"It was a huge success. The students were proud and the parents and families were over-the-moon proud," she said. "That's something we're definitely going to keep doing."

Kathleen Miller took Ronhovde's Drawing I course this semester. The 19-year-old Phoenix resident said the class has inspired her to want to do more.

"She's always saying something positive about what we're doing," Miller said. "It's definitely boosted my self-esteem."

Ronhovde wants students to realize their options are endless and the public to see how talented the students are, she said.

"I'm constantly searching for opportunities for them," she said. "Being an artist is so much more than being in the classroom."

Students will be out of the classroom and enjoying the grand opening celebration at the aquarium in Waddell Dec. 29. Miller has four pieces up at the new restaurant.



"It's going to be crazy to walk in there and be like, that's mine!" Miller said. "It's nerve-wracking really. It's pretty cool, though. We only had three weeks to create those pieces. I didn't sleep during that period."

Students have more than 20 pieces up with aquatic, Polynesian and nature themes. Miller's works are of a seahorse, a shark, two fish and a cartoon-like fish.

"They can be bought. I kind of want them to stay there, though," Miller said.

For her first semester of art, Miller's work has been amazing and steadily improved," Ronhovde said.

"The work she's produced has blown me away," she said.

In addition to drawing classes, the college offers photography, Photoshop and computer graphics classes.

"In the fall, we'll be adding painting, which I am very excited about," Ronhovde said. "The school has been really receptive to my ideas. We're growing."

A SEAHORSE PAINTING is among Kathleen Miller's works displayed at Tiburon, the Wildlife World Zoo and Aquarium's restaurant.

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