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New mural adorns Full Circle's building

by Patrick Bilow Herald Reporter

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A group of Full Circle of Lake County participants gather around the mural they helped create, which now hangs from the west-facing wall of the nonprofit's building on East Seventh Street. Pictured from left are Brailee Plane, Kennedy Duran, Madison Woodland, Meredith Saldivar, Myrian Silva, Alison Bujanda, Melany Lopez, Zoe VanderWeit, Aaliyah Landa and Jennifer Ma

Photo by Patrick Bilow

After months of work, a group of Lake County students gathered last week to unveil a new mural they created with local artist McKenzie Stock. Displayed on the west-facing wall of Full Circle of Lake County's building, the mural showcases warm colors and elements that reflect Lake County's culture.

More than 20 students who regularly participate in programming at Full Circle of Lake County (FCLC) contributed to the mural at one point or another. Stock, who previously worked as a Lake County School District art teacher, said the mural project was designed to amplify young voices.

“There is something special about Lake County’s kids,” said Stock, who knew many of the participating kids as young students in art class or campers at Rockies Rock Adventure Camp, where Stock also worked. “Our kids are gritty and smart, and they play an important role in our community. In a small town like ours, youth should have a say.”



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Stock, who worked with students in FCLC’s after school program, began the process by asking students what they wanted to see in the mural. A number of ideas emerged, including snacks, song-filled rides in FCLC’s van, immigration, gender and sexual identity and recreation. “I was impressed by some of the themes they brought up,” said Stock.

From there, Stock sketched a paint-by-numbers outline on two pieces of plywood and invited students to add color. What emerged is an eight-by-eight-foot symmetrical mural imbued with shades of orange, yellow, pink and other colors. Accompanying the mural are separate placards that explain the piece and its significance to Lake County’s identity. The placards are showcased in both English and Spanish.

From a distance, the mural is a symphony of shapes and colors that blends well with FCLC’s building, but look closer and various themes become apparent.

At the center of the mural is a multicolored western tanager, a migratory bird that stops in Lake County during annual trips to and from Mexico and South America. Near the bottom of the installation is a monarch butterfly, another migratory species. Stock said these elements are meant to reflect Lake County’s immigrant population and diversity. “We are thankful for our friends from around the world,” reads one of the placards.

The mural also represents other themes that students mentioned. Mountain bikes are depicted alongside rainbow flags, the FCLC van moves along while blasting music, a fork and knife are set for snack time, and vines of blooming flowers stretch between the various creative elements.

According to Stock, the mural also serves as a “welcome home” for FCLC. The nonprofit moved into its new home on East Seventh Street last year, where the mural is now displayed. Stock hopes the mural will act as a greeting sign to all who enter FCLC’s new building. The local artist also wants kids to feel a sense of pride and ownership when they walk by the mural.

“I think the mural looks amazing. The kids did a really great job,” said Stock. “It’s been an honor to work with them and help amplify local youth voices. But this mural is only the start of what our kids have to offer. We should listen to them more.”