

Creativity continues at HAYC3

By Chris Mays, *Bennington Banner*

Hoosick Armory Youth Center and Community Coalition is many things and a hub for arts is one of them.

The group has fixed up space in the Armory to offer various programs and space for start-up businesses since it took over ownership of the building nearly two years ago.

"It's been a process," said Aelish Nealon, executive director of the non-profit HAYC3. "We connect community with art in any way we can."

On the heels of last year's successful Hoosick Barn Quilt Trail, where wood was gathered and painters put their special touch on each piece, HAYC3 will now be introducing new projects this summer.

The quilt trail saw 30 barn quilts go up at residences, businesses and other buildings. And a map with corresponding photographs of the barn quilts was made available.

"Most communities only have 10 to 20," Nealon noted. "It was an amazing labor of love."

The map is in its fourth printing, she said, meaning over 4,000 copies were handed out since its release. Visitors and residents alike are picking them up.

Quilts were again approached with the Hoosick Falls Community Quilt Project. Free quilt-square kits were given out to participants that were to return finished squares to HAYC3. The larger quilt will be on display in the fall.

A separate map will be created for Hoosick Is Illuminated, described as a community art celebration in which the streets of the town and village will be aglow with illuminated projects, a parade, a stroll and a luminary lantern launch. All the pieces will be on a timer so that they turn on simultaneously.

"Artists are taking light fixtures and they're turning them into chandeliers and other structures," said Nealon, noting music performances will be heard during the stroll.

A luminary workshop will kick off the project on Sept. 2, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Armory. Other workshops are scheduled for Sept. 5, 9, 12, 16, 19 and 23. The parade will begin at 7 p.m. on Sept. 26, with a stroll and lantern launch following. More information can be found at hayc3.org.

Another art project will involve painting benches found around the community. The benches will be kept at the Armory for a month then they'll be returned to their rightful places.

Besides art, the group began operating what is known as a Little Free Library, a community-based book exchange. A box is kept in the Armory and users are asked to take a book or two but also to leave one if possible. Similar setups are described at littlefreelibrary.org.

"It's a national movement," explained Nealon. "It encourages community, reading and goodwill."

The HAYC3 Armory also offers a recording studio, live music venue, kitchen, yoga studio, space for meditation and a room to listen to vinyl records. One room is used for hosting art gallery events while other parts of the building are used as an incubator for small businesses.

"We help start-ups get on their feet," said Nealon.

She said the group is always looking for volunteers.

Contact Chris Mays at cmays@benningtonbanner.com or 802-447-7567, ext. 111.