

Art hives popping up at Labrador Friendship Centre

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Photos courtesy of Denise Cole (top left: Dawna Lee and Denise Cole; others from 2018 Labrador Creative Arts Festival)

HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, N.L. —

The SHIELD project is hosting a series of pop-up art hives and a heart circle group Wednesday evenings from Jan. 30 to April 17 at the Labrador Friendship Centre.

No previous art experience is necessary to participate in either event said Sexual Health Information Exchange Labrador District (more commonly known as SHIELD) project coordinator, Denise Cole.

The project empowers youth to explore wellness, relationships, self-worth and sexual health in fun and interactive ways that include working with art role models and health professionals.

The Labrador Friendship Centre sponsors the three-year (2018-21) project funded primarily by the Public Health Agency of Canada's HIV Hep C Community Action Fund. It is aimed at youth from central/coastal Labrador communities.

"We look at using our culture and technology as a way to provide safe and supportive spaces for young people to discuss health and wellbeing in a more holistic way," said Cole.

The heart circle group and art hives project is sponsored by the SHIELD Project and the Community Youth Network through the support of the Labrador Friendship Centre.

Art therapist Dawna Lee has come onboard to offer both the heart circle group and the art hives.

The heart circle group isn't a drop-in group, she said, rather those who attend stay for two hours.

"It will happen every other week, alternating with the pop-up hives," Lee said. "At each circle we will introduce a topic and we will make art around that intention and we will do a little bit of writing."

Topics such as self, transformation, managing anxiety and grief and loss may be explored during the heart circle groups.

The evening will also include a sharing circle, she said, where participants can show their art and read what they wrote about it, if they feel comfortable doing so.

"If they choose not to share that's fine. There's no pressure... the circle is really to discover personal meaning about what you're wanting to reflect upon," she said.

One of the topics that will be explored by the heart circle group will be transforming stories through altered books, Lee noted.

"We'll make an altered book which is taking an old book and then putting our work into it. It could be collaging or drawing or painting — whatever (participants) feel they want to do," she said.

The circle will also offer an opportunity for participants to explore the relationship between their outer and inner self through mask making.

"How we present ourselves to the world is often very different than how we feel inside," Lee said. "So we'll be decorating the mask on the outside as well as on the inside."

Community studio

A term coined by Dr. Janis Timm-Bottos of Concordia University, an art hive is a community studio where people come together to make art.

"This particular art hive will be a pop-up as it's not a permanent location," Lee explained. "We'll run it every other week as a drop-in environment. You can come for the full two hours or you can come for five minutes. It doesn't matter."

All art-making material will be provided free of charge.

Youth can also bring a project from home that they would like to complete.

"We'll also have non-traditional found objects type of materials – it could be recycling like egg cartons... it could be broken toys."

Youth between the ages of 13-18 are welcome to both the heart circle group and art hives.

"We like to cultivate the artist's identity. So, in the art hives, everybody is an artist regardless of skill level," Lee noted. "We value people's skills and their exchange of skills.

"There is no one person that stands out as the instructor. Everybody is sharing their skills and they are valued for that."

Cole said while the heart circle group is specifically for youth, any young person who would like to bring an adult with them to the art hives can do so.

"We say an adult needs to be accompanied by a youth," she said.

The pop-up art hives and heart circle group run from 6:30–8: 30 p.m.

For more information call Cole 709-896-8302, ext 224; Email: dcole@lfchvgb.ca or visit www.lfcshieldproject.ca. Information can also be found on the LFC SHIELD Project Facebook page.

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