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Local artist donates to peace project for Ukraine

By Georgia Sullivan Chronicle Reporter Apr 29, 2022

From across the world to right here in Citrus County, everyone has the potential to make an impact.

Muriel Hanny, a local artist and retired art teacher in Homosassa, recently donated two borders she designed to go on sheets of paper for Ukrainian refugees in France to use for their drawings in the global #KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine project.

The peace project was started by Aralynn McMane, Hanny's cousin, through her nonprofit Global Youth & News Media. In the wake of a sudden and devastating war between Russia and Ukraine, #KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine is hoping to provide a method for children to soothe their anxieties and deal with their new realities through drawing.

"Anything that would help make life more normal," said Hanny. "It's giving them something to use to express themselves. We can only imagine what they are going through. They're little kids, they've never known war before."

Hanny became involved after receiving a text from McMane one night saying, "Could you do an outline and use the Ukrainian colors?" So, Hanny painted one that same night, not knowing anything about what it would be used for. She emailed it to McMane assuming that her cousin would give her feedback and then she would send a finalized version, but McMane actually ended up using that one.



Muriel Hanny, local retired art teacher in Homosassa, recently donated two borders she designed for the global #KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine project for Ukrainian refugee children to use while drawing. She is shown in her home holding a recent painting she did of her newly adopted dog Ernie.



Ukrainian refugee Maria, 8, draws a picture of her family and home using paper with one of Muriel Hanny's donated borders.

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"It looked like worms to me," said Hanny. "But I guess it works!"

Both Hanny, 86, and her late husband, William "Bill" Hanny, worked as art teachers before moving to Homosassa in retirement. They taught in New York for around 23 years, which was where they also had their son David, and then moved to Oklahoma and taught for 13 more years before retiring.

Before moving to Oklahoma, Hanny originally wanted to move to Florida since she was born here in 1936 in Daytona Beach, but had moved to upstate New York when she was 15 years old. When deciding where to possibly put down roots, she pulled out a map of Florida and poked her finger at a random spot, landing on Inverness. So, she started preparing to apply to teach here, but then her husband convinced her to move to Oklahoma where they had family. It wasn't until retiring that they finally settled in Homosassa.

"If I was still in education," said Hanny, "I would probably try to set up for kids here to be able to trade drawings with the Ukrainian kids who are participating in this project, like a little exchange program."



Hanny and her husband loved painting together, Hanny using watercolor to paint landscapes and nature and William doing hyper-realistic pencil sketching.

"Art has always been part of our lives," Hanny said.



A drawing done by Ukrainian refugee Maria in France of her family and home using paper with one of Muriel Hanny's donated borders for the #KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine project.

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She and her son, David, now live together after he moved in to help take care of his father who died in 2015 after a hard-fought battle with Alzheimer's. The two recently adopted a dog from a local shelter named Ernest "Ernie" Hemingway – a name given by the shelter that seems to have stuck.

McMane seemed very appreciative of her cousin's contribution to such an impactful global project, saying, "I knew from the handcrafted Christmas cards she has sent for years that she could be counted on to do something uplifting and whimsical."

Having been a journalist for years and an editor at the St. Petersburg Times, McMane has made it a goal to challenge false media by launching a nonprofit based both in France and the United States, Global Youth & News Media, to empower youth to use news media and journalism as tools to help society advance.

"In an era when questionable journalism and falsehoods regularly assault the public, the act of rewarding and reinforcing good news media practice, amplifying journalistic youth voices and offering lessons about the worth of journalism itself can offer both hope for the public and emulation by other news outlets," as said on the Global Youth & News Media website.

For information on how to get involved in the #KidsDrawPeace4Ukraine project, visit globalyouthandnewsmediaprize.net/howto.

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