

Artist residency ‘inspirational’ for both guest artist and students

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Sentinel photo by SIERRA BOLGER

(From left) Artist Emily Nell, Art Teacher Sara Sutton and Jennifer Hartzler pose during art class at the Mifflin County High School.

LEWISTOWN — Artist, educator and writer, Emily Nell attended the Mifflin County High School during the week of March 18, 2024 to teach students about her background and art style. This visit was a part of the school’s Artist in Residency program.

“I love to be in the action, inspiring young people and connecting. My time at Mifflin County High School was truly inspirational,” said Nell.

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts supports the residency through funding via the Arts in Education program. This program funding comes from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, an agency within the Office of the Governor, through an annual appropriation by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Funding requires a local match. The local partner agency is Perry County Council of the Arts, which arranges and oversees the residencies. Additional funding comes from the school district and from Educational Improvement Tax Credit donations to PCCA by DuMor, Inc., Orrstown Bank, Pennian Bank, PPL Electric Utilities, UPMC Health Benefits, and Weis Markets, Inc.

Through artist residencies, the program enables artists to help others explore and develop their creativity and artistic skills in a variety of educational, community and institutional settings.

“We were excited to offer this special and unique opportunity to our students to learn more about Pennsylvania Dutch arts and explore their own culture,” said Sara Sutton, Mifflin County High School art teacher.

Inspired by the indigenous people she traveled with, Nell let her Pennsylvania Dutch background impact her art. And, she lives by her personal philosophy, *“Once you know where you come from, you have a better understanding of where you’re going.”* Nell imparted her knowledge to the students about how her art moves her.

“I was into art as early as I can remember. When I was eight years old, I asked for a Bob Ross paint set for Christmas,” said Nell.

Nell has a background in Pennsylvania German, also known as Pennsylvania Dutch. She practices the art of Fraktur (family records art in watercolor) and Scherenschnitte, German paper cutting.

Her awards include first place, mixed media, in Perry County Council of the Arts annual juried exhibition, 2018, and second place, mixed media, at the Pekin Days Art Show in Pekin, N.C. In May and December 2018, she was the featured 3-D demonstration artist at the Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colo. She has also exhibited her Centripetal Satire series in Canyon Gallery of the Boulder Public Library in Colorado and displayed her one-person exhibit, *“Wonder and Whimsy,”* at the Atrium Gallery in the Bozeman, Mont., Library.

Nell reflected on her time at Mifflin County High School and said that she felt *“at home”* with the students and teachers.

She added, “As a teen, I was very overweight and bullied. Art was the one area no one could make fun of me [...] my safe place, the one area I could excel. We all have our struggles and this week was meant for self reflection, taking a look at where we have been so we have a better understanding of how to move forward.”

Nell stated that the students’ presentations were *“fantastic”* and that they inspired new creativity that she can utilize in her art studio.

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