

## **Her Legacy: Women of Fort Collins (Living Her Legacy) Project information**

*What inspired the idea and who are the artists and/or partners involved?*

### **SOCETIAL ISSUE:**

Locally, nationally and worldwide women are not afforded the same opportunities as men due to a full range of reasons from implicit bias to outright discrimination. Although this issue is changing in the United States, it still does exist. According to research done and compiled by AAUW, women still are paid less than their male counterparts for the same work even after adjusting for all factors such as length of career, occupation, total hours worked and level of education. Goodman and Damour from the Center of Research on Girls report that a lack of role models is a reason women leave physics, chemistry, electrical engineering and computer science. When researching if college students need same gender role models, Penelope Lockwood found that 27% of women report gender was a factor in choosing a role model because they are inspired by the gender-related obstacles the chosen role model had to overcome. In addition, women's accomplishments are often under-recognized within communities.

Zonta International, began in 1919, has been addressing and advocating for the rights of women worldwide for many years. As an organization it is committed to improving the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of women at the global and local level through service and advocacy. Patti Smith, a local Fort Collins Zonta member conceived the Her Legacy: Women of Fort Collins project to provide role models for young women, create awareness of the often silent contributions of women and honor local women for their achievements in following their hearts passion. After visiting Denver and viewing the 1989 *Colorado Panorama: A People's History* Patti was inspired to create something similar in Fort Collins to honor local women.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Her Legacy: Women of Fort Collins is a community Historic Public Women's Art educational exhibit promoting awareness of local cultural and historic figures. This visual and digital exhibit will consist of portraits of notable women who have helped to create the fabric of our city. A nationally recognized local artist will create these portraits utilizing a 3-8 color woodcut color print process, which will then be digitally printed onto graffiti protected laminate panels. This permanent exhibit of 48 total portraits will provide 6 interchangeable panels of 4 portraits each for display, half in the Old Town exhibit and half for classrooms and museum use. These panels will be exchanged yearly. It was approved by our Historic Preservation Society to foster community interactions and enhance the unique character of our community through recognition of prominent women. This exhibit will be displayed in the Old Town area of our city to engage guests and residents who visit. In addition, Poudre School District, a partner in this endeavor, will write curriculum utilizing the art display, panels and website as a part of 2nd grade community history, 4<sup>th</sup> grade Colorado history, middle school social studies and high school art classes. Colorado State University, another partner, will also include this project in their women's studies major curriculum. Each portrait will have a QR code and list the website where information about each woman and her accomplishments is shared through writing, video, and audio presentations.

## **ARTISTS:**

In order to meet the needs of the project, the individual portraits must be realistic so the individuals are easily recognizable. In addition, a unique exhibit was desired so a method which was aesthetically pleasing yet different than any of the other art currently located in Old Town was sought. Rachael Davis, a local artist, was selected and will use a Japanese wood-cut color printing process which truly is unique for this location. Rachael, a graduate of Colorado State University with a Masters in Fine Art, is a nationally recognized local artist, art educator and former co-director of a local art gallery. She also has extensive education in the arts in Italy and Australia. She has been selected to participate in several juried art shows on the east coast, being one of 35 artists selected out of 1100. Ann Hulton Maddocks, a local artist and director/owner of Anna's Art Explorers, when learning of the project and Rachael's involvement stated "the project will not only be a skillful and unique aesthetic acknowledgment of the female leaders in our community but will also be carefully and thoughtfully executed."

Belgin Yucelin, a sculptor from Boulder will create the 6 hand-sculpted bronze frames necessary. These will be opening, closing and locking enclosures that will hold 4 portraits each. These will be specifically artistically designed to add to the excellence of the project.

## **PARTNERS:**

The Downtown Development Authority, responsible for the Old Town Revitalization Project, was instrumental in the planning stages. Due to their help, we have secured a location, gained assistance from the Fort Collins Tourism Board for current data and future marketing, learned about budgetary planning processes, met city requirements and gained final approval for the project to go forward. In addition, Poudre School District will pay staff to write the curriculum for second grade Fort Collins history, fourth grade Colorado history, middle school social studies courses, and high school art classes using the images and biographical information on the women represented in the legacy project. Colorado State University will also write the curriculum for the women studies program. In addition, Dr. Kevin Pond, Animal Science Department, is providing valuable assistance in fundraising consulting. The psychology department is helping create survey questions to measure the impact of the project.

In addition, we are pursuing partnerships with several organizations such as Respite Care, Inc, and Aztlán Community Center. These organizations provide needed services for underserved, distinct groups within our community and would be involved in the creation and implementation of art workshops associated with the project.

## **Our community, partner relationships and how they will be engaged:**

Fort Collins is a town located 65 miles north of Denver, Colorado. Of the approximately 160,000 people, 74% are Caucasian, 17% Hispanic and 9% Asian, Black or Native American. Colorado State University is the largest employer but several high tech companies also employ many residents. The median age is 29 with 52% of residents having completed a 4-year degree. Livability.com has ranked it #14 in its list of best places to live and #9 in healthiest places to live. Fort Collins offers many recreational opportunities, highly rated schools and strong social support services. Located close to the mountains and Horsetooth reservoir, open space is highly valued, including 1275 acres of developed parks within the area including several with water features and/or handicap accessible equipment.

From the beginning the community has been involved in this project. Patti, the creator of the idea and project manager, spoke with over 15 different individuals and organizations in the initial planning stages of the project. From these discussions she not only gained practical advice for organizing the project but also guidance on what these individuals and organizations would like to see the project accomplish. The project continues to grow and change based on community feedback and suggestions. Many comments have been made in support:

Karen McWilliams, FC Historic Society supports *“the Zonta Club of FC Women’s Legacy Mural. I want my daughter to be exposed to and appreciate the significant contributions of women to our community throughout FC History.”*

Matthew Robenalt, DDA Executive Director stated *“Storytelling through art is a powerful form of interpersonal communication, particularly when communicating an authentic experience of a city. The Zonta Club’s mural project, which will be highly visible to local and tourism guests of Old Town Square, imparts the spontaneity of publicly displayed art and place-making with the importance of reflecting on the stories of people that have made Fort Collins an intriguing place to visit, live, work and play.”*

Katy Schneider, Marketing Director Visit Fort Collins added, *“Fort Collins has a large appreciation for public art and adding an element of personal story telling through photographs would only heighten the attractiveness of the variety we have to offer visitors.”*

All of the women selected will be chosen by a panel of people from the community. The project was advertised in multiple forums with an open invitation for individuals to participate in the nomination and selection of these women. The first 36 women have already been selected and the final 12 will be chosen on October 19<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the first 24 women were introduced to the community in June at a special event where the community were invited to attend. The Coloradoan and Style magazine have written multi-page articles covering this event and inviting additional submissions and participants to join the project.

Through the curriculum which will be written by Colorado State University and Poudre School District, many families in our community will learn about these women through the instruction of their children and the projects associated with this instruction. One of Zonta collaborators at Poudre School District, Laura Cronen said the following about the project:

*“Upon learning about the Her Legacy: Women of Fort Collins mural project I was excited for the unique addition to the culture of the Fort Collins community. The renderings by artist Racheal Davis capture each of the women represented in a wood cut print that have a timeless quality and will be enjoyed for years to come. Additionally, as the Visual Arts Curriculum Facilitator in Poudre School District, I look forward to collaborating with the Zonta Club to bring the artworks and historical information surrounding each of the chosen significant women in the Fort Collins Community to the schools. This will highlight both the arts and the accomplishments of women in Fort Collins, and serve as an inspiration to girls and women to reach for their dreams as they learn about influential women, past and present, in their own community.”*

We are currently in process of developing some art workshops/presentations to involve the community, particularly some of our underserved populations. These partnerships are still being developed but we hope to include Respite Care, Inc., a nonprofit organization providing short term, quality care for children with developmental disabilities. We are currently discussing a partnership to provide art materials and an interactive art experience for children at Respite Care. We are also investigating providing an art workshop at the Aztlan Community Center during one or more of their Youth Nights/Kids Café. Youth are invited, free of charge, to participate in activities from 3-10pm. During these nights, Kids Café provides free meals to children at risk for hunger. We are also looking for additional community groups or events to involve.

These workshops are intended to provide an opportunity for community members to create art themselves honoring an important woman role model in their lives and the activities developed would be shared with the school district for inclusion in the curriculum. In addition, postcards providing information about the project or a few of the women honored will be distributed to encourage families to visit the exhibit or website. The art presentations will include demonstrations of the artistic process during Friday night art walks near the location of the exhibit and potentially at other community events.

Her Legacy: Women of Fort Collins has the potential to affect millions of people. The Visit Fort Collins office estimates over 1 million visitors come to Fort Collins each summer as a destination. If even 1% of these visit Old Town (100,000) and 10% of Old Town visitors view Her Legacy: Women of Fort Collins, 10,000 visitors a year will view the portraits and have an opportunity to learn about these women. Based on Poudre School District October count 2014-15 numbers we estimate that, at a minimum, over 10,167 students/guests will benefit each school year. In addition, about 720 students are enrolled in Women's Studies major at Colorado State University. So, our potential yearly audience is easily over 21,887 a year. We hope that these visually appealing artistic portraits, will be the reason visitors stop and take a moment to visit the website to read about these women. We believe that learning about women who have been visionaries for change by following their heart's passions can become role models for girls and women and inspire others to make a difference through commitment, courage and resilience as modeled by these notable honorees.

We invite you to visit our websites to learn more about our project and to learn about the first 24 women selected:

[www.LivingHerLegacy.org](http://www.LivingHerLegacy.org)

[www.CrowdRise.com/LivingHerLegacyZontaColorado](http://www.CrowdRise.com/LivingHerLegacyZontaColorado)