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Art Break Day comes to Corvallis

On Friday, Corvallis joins 29 other communities worldwide — from San Francisco, California, to Auroville, India — in the fourth annual Art Break Day.

An art hub will be set up in downtown Corvallis along the riverfront where anyone and everyone is invited to sit down, take a break from their lives and make art. There is no cost and no time limit; supplies are provided and participants are invited to use the various paints, oil pastels, pencils and markers to create their art.

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When the event's organizers, Lauren Odell Usher Sharpton and Lisa Rasmussen, first came up with the idea, hosting the hub in a public space and allowing passersby to participate for free were key to the event's purpose and success.

"One of the main goals (of Art Break Day) is to get people to make art," Sharpton said.

"(Rasmussen) and I thought if it's out in a public space and if it's free, people might be more inclined to do it."

Sharpton and Rasmussen are also the founders of Art is Moving, an organization dedicated to sharing the benefits of art with the world.

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"We're really passionate about the positive benefits art can have on people when they have the chance and the opportunity to make art," Sharpton said. "One of the main goals of Art is Moving is to do just that — provide opportunities for people to make art."

Along with Art Break Day, Art is Moving created the ARTcart!, a mobile art cart in Oakland, California, that moves from corner to corner setting up art-making stations; and Art In Your Pocket, a pocket-sized box containing art supplies such as paper, pencil and oil pastels, purchased from and handpacked by Sharpton and Rasmussen. According to their website, more than 3,000 Art In Your Pockets have been sold to people from around the world.

Along with Art Break Day, the ARTcart! and Art In Your Pocket are designed to encourage people to take a few minutes to an hour-long break from their daily grind to make art.

"We think that art is very similar in its benefits to eating right and exercising," Sharpton said.

"We're trying to encourage people to make art and making an art break part of their normal daily routine."

And this doesn't apply solely to artists or those who create on a regular basis — Sharpton said anyone, despite their skill level, can benefit from taking an art break.

"All ages and all skill levels are welcome," she said. "We want everybody to make art because we think art is for everyone."

Sharpton moved to Corvallis a year ago, and since then has been focusing on Corvallis as her main hub.

"I'm hoping to create a space for the community to come together and connect through the act of making art together," she said.

Sharpton and Rasmussen started Art Break Day in 2011 in five cities around the Bay Area, including San Francisco. In 2012, Sharpton said, it grew to seven cities in two states, and in 2013 went global. The event is held the first Friday of September.

This year, 29 communities around the world will

participate, including places in Amsterdam, India and Mexico, and in 10 U.S. states including Alaska and Wisconsin.

Sharpton said that she is often asked why Art Break Day occurs only once a year — specially when the goal is to get people to incorporate art breaks into their daily lives — but Sharpton said the event itself, as well as its long reach, is more about what it is saying rather than what it is doing.

“Art Break Day itself is really about sending a message to the world,” Sharpton said. “It’s a volunteer-based day where volunteers from around the world organize their own Art Break Days in their own cities, and they do it because they’re passionate about the arts. They’re sending a message to the entire world that they believe that art’s important, and should be part of the public sphere of every community.”

Corvallis’ Art Break Day runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 5, at an art hub downtown near the riverfront. For more information about Art is Moving and Art Break Day, see www.artismovingnow.com.

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