

UWF art students provoke thought with “Before I Die” exhibit

Pensacola, Fla. – April 4, 2016 – University of West Florida students have created a participatory art project that invites passers-by to contemplate death, reflect on life and share their personal aspirations in public.

Carrie Fonder’s art appreciation class covered nine wall panels in vinyl chalkboard paper and used spray paint to stencil this prompt on each: “Before I die I want to _____.” Viewers are encouraged to pick up chalk and fill in the blanks.

The installation is based on the work of Candy Chang of New Orleans. After she lost someone she loved, Chang channeled her grief into this project on an abandoned house in her neighborhood. It soon garnered global attention, and Chang created a how-to website to help others replicate her work. Today, the international project has fostered community and connection worldwide, with more than 1,000 walls erected in more than 70 countries.

The panels are in the lobby of the Center for the Fine and Performing Arts, Building 82, on the University’s Pensacola Campus at 11000 University Parkway until April 8. After that, the panels will be on display at the Voices of Pensacola presented by Gulf Power, located at 117 E. Government St., through May 20.

“Doing art like this teaches you about patience,” said Jacob Dubeau, a UWF freshman majoring in business and finance. “You have to have patience when you create, and you have to have patience about a lot of things in life.”

While Fonder’s students were busy smoothing the vinyl and applying the stenciled sentences, they discussed how they would finish the thought. Their suggestions included go skydiving, see the Seven Wonders of the World, save someone’s life, get married and have a family, become a millionaire, and find peace.

“We studied Chang’s work and then got the chance to bring the theoretical to life,” said Bond Buwalda, a UWF sophomore majoring in advertising. “It’s really neat to get to do some art. I would recommend this class to my friends.”

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See attached photo of UWF students working on the “Before I Die” exhibit

About the University of West Florida: Founded in 1963, the University of West Florida is a vibrant, distinctive institution of higher learning with undergraduate, graduate and targeted research programs. With multiple locations in Northwest Florida, the University serves a student population of more than 12,000. Dedicated to helping students realize their full potential, UWF favors small class sizes with quality teacher-scholars who deliver personalized, innovative, hands-on learning and leadership opportunities.

