

AVP 4-5-12 Lancaster hit by 'yarn bombing'

By: Gerry Price

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LANCASTER - "It's like TPing with yarn." That's how one participant described Wednesday's "yarn bombing" at City Hall and the downtown bandstand.

However, this type of "TPing" won't get you in trouble with your friends' parents or your own, or with law enforcement. In fact, the teenagers and adults who were involved not only weren't in trouble, they were encouraged to decorate almost anything they saw in Hearn's Plaza at City Hall by city and Antelope Valley Union High School District officials as the kickoff for the annual district student art

show.

Seattle-based fiber artist Kathleen Carpenter chuckled as she described the tree she was decorating as her "Casino Royale" tree.

Carpenter said she and her sister, R. Rex Parris High School art instructor Kris Holladay, had been doing fiber workshops about eight years and had done something with fiber on trees. Then she saw Pioneer Square transformed at Christmastime by yarn bombers, "and there's where I got the idea."

The concept originally began in Europe and only recently made its way to the States, she said.

Holladay, Carpenter and other adult chaperones herded a group of 18 Parris High students through a series of projects at the city square and at the bandstand in front of BeX restaurant on Lancaster Boulevard.

Jenny Mauss, one of a handful of adult volunteers who help out on the project, said the attraction for

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her was creativity and the color.

Mauss, of California City, joined Diana Couch and Ruth Sperling from the Antelope Valley chapter of Project Linus in adding their touch to the day's activities. Members of Project Linus, named for the blanket-carrying character in the "Peanuts" comic strip, crochet or knit blankets for those "who are seriously ill, traumatized or otherwise in need," according to the national organization's Web page.

"When we heard about the crocheting, it was a natural fit for us," Mauss said.

Their handiwork can be seen on the tops of the City Hall plaza light standards, each of which is adorned with a crocheted cap and eyes, and around the bases of many of the trees.

Perhaps their most interesting piece sits on top of two recycling bins along Fern Avenue - a large red octopus spread across an ocean.

Couch said making the octopus stay in place was a challenge. Noting that the lightness of the yarn was such that the artwork tended to want to blow away and the octopus collapse, they first tried to stuff it with paper. When that didn't work because the paper was still too light, "we held it down with a bottle of water inside," she said.

By midday Wednesday, the students were well on their way to making the plaza a huge piece of art. In addition to the octopus, the bushes closest to City Hall were adorned with multicolored spider webs, and the giant sequoia Holiday Tree was covered with pom-pom ball ornaments, while the trunks of the other trees were covered with variably colored crocheted wraps and the branches were festooned with a variety of ornaments - pom-pom balls and miniature figures, among others. The capped light standards were wrapped in a fuzzy yarn, and the planters near the street were filled with yarn scraps tied down with mesh and topped with long-stemmed yarn flowers.

At the restaurant, students worked out their throwing arms as they tossed balls of yarn over the crossed arches of the bandstand as they worked to make a giant, vari-colored spider web ("We might make a big spider for it," teacher Holladay mused. "We've already got a bunch of small ones.")

They also were industriously wrapping the free-standing BeX sign and hanging tiny yarn people from it.

Students' handiwork also was evident between the two locales, with pom-pom flowers decorating the base of a number of light standards along the ramblas in the center of the boulevard and the tree planters in front of the Lancaster Performing Arts Center.

One other thing was decorated by the enterprising students as well: Carpenter's pickup truck, which was covered in crocheted pieces except for the windows, the license plates and the driver's side door. ("We had to keep it street legal," she said with a grin.)

However, by the time the art exhibit opens today, she says the rest of the vehicle will be covered to make it into yet another piece of art to help open the high school district's 27th annual student art exhibition, which will be on display through May 20.

The exhibition will open with a free public reception from 5 to 7 p.m. today, at which more than \$1,000 in cash will be awarded to top student artists.

The exhibition, put on by the high school district and the Lancaster Museum of Art & History,

encourages and supports the artistic experimentation and expression of the Antelope Valley's next generation, organizers say.

More than 120 pieces of artwork have been submitted by better than 100 students at Antelope Valley, Desert Winds, Eastside, Highland, Lancaster, Littlerock, Palmdale, Pete Knight, Quartz Hill and Parris

high schools. The exhibition includes a wide variety of media - oil, ceramic, watercolor, photography, acrylic, plaster, charcoal, pencil, scratchboard, color pencil, computer art, pastel and mixed media.

Judging the contest are Michelle Shaver, a museum board member, and Laura Boyd, the museum historian.

The yarn exhibit is expected to stay up for the length of the art exhibition, or as long as Mother Nature and inquisitive little hands let it.

For details on the art exhibition, call the museum at (661) 723-6250.