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Wednesday, September 26, 2001

Local artist helps spread Lupus awareness

As visitors stepped through the doorway of Covenant Life Presbyterian Life church in Saltillo last week, it only took seconds to realize that what was taking place there was being done so with purpose.

Although the churches multipurpose room has been used for many things over the years, the week of September 7 through the 15, its use was for something that you would expect to find only in a large city and not in Saltillo.

Transforming the large hall into an art gallery was no small task, but the purpose behind the exhibit was one that had touched the hearts of all those who attend serves there. Including the heart of Antoinette Badenhorst, a South African Ceramic Artist and a member of the church.

On exhibit, "Memories From Africa," featuring the Saltillo resident's work that very much reflects her South African culture but more importantly is a reflection of her heart.

"I kept hearing of this young woman in our church, Lesley Malone, who was battling a severe case of lupus, and my heart went out to her. Lupus isn't something you hear about all the time but it is a horrible disease. When I heard that Lesley had suffered a stroke, I her.

Deciding to "put the tool that God had given" her to good use, and with the encouragement of her family and church members, this exhibit came forth. "By doing this exhibit I pray that it will bring about an awareness of just how horrible Lupus is and encourage others to give toward the fight."

As visitors enter they were encouraged to ask questions and asked to read the names on each of the different pieces. "When I name my pieces, I'm trying to get a message out. Several pieces on exhibit and named before the recent attacks on America amaze visitors at their symbolism.

Badenhorst's work is different and she attributes the outcome to God and the different textures she uses to create many of her pieces. Several pieces have that unfinished looked and some are so transparent that you can almost see through them. "I use organic materials to create my textures and work with the clay to bring out the natural beauty."

Before leaving, visitors were also encouraged by a smiling Antoinette to "make a donation before you leave."

The artist, who along with her husband, Koos, and their family have lived in Saltillo for band was transferred here with his company and we are enjoying Mississippi."

Currently the family is awaiting their green cards, which means that they would become American Citizens and according to Badenhorst, "we want to be apart of what is going on now in America. We appreciate the American Spirit that built this country."

"Lesley is a remarkable woman and she has so much courage. This was such a blessing for me to do something for her. I would like to have other exhibits to continue on in this Lupus awareness fight."

Individuals interested in Badenhorst's work or if you would be interested in hosting an exhibit please contact Badenhorst at 869-1651 or via email at: www.timakia@yahoo.com

Antoinette Badenhorst

Understanding Lupus

Butterflies and sunglasses could be considered the mascots of lupus because sensitivity to the sun and a rash pattern in the form of a butterfly over the bridge of the nose and cheeks is a common occurrence. The range of severity of lupus and the symptoms vary greatly from patient to patient. Some common symptoms include generalized aching, weakness, lack of energy, weight loss, diminished appetite, fever, chills, frequent infections, loss of hair, rash and sensitivity to the sun. The cause of lupus is unknown. It may affect skin, joints, blood, kidney and other organs due to a malfunction in the immune system that causes the body to launch an immune response against its own cells. There is no cure for lupus, but treatments are available to help control the symptoms.

Who is Lesley Malone

Lesley Malone is like many other young women. She is 27 years old, married, and has two children, who are the treasures of her life. Lesley is also unique in many ways because she has a severe case of systemic lupus. For several years she noticed that something seemed to be wrong, but her disease was hard to identify. She was finally diagnosed with systemic lupus three years ago. Since then, she has had many trying days and the disease has become severe at times with flare-ups that required surgeries, such as the installation of a pacemaker. She recently suffered from a stroke when the lupus attacked her brain. She is currently in rehab in an effort to increase the use of her right side where she experienced some paralysis. Through the many trials, Lesley has been an inspiration to everyone that God has placed in contact with her. She offers praise to God and states that His strength gets her through each day.