

# Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation Peace Certifications in Sumter County

*Yasmin's Art Classes becomes Peace Certified.*

Yasmin Hasnain, owner of Yasmin's Art Classes, first met with Jeni Stepanek and Laura Bauer of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation to discuss peace on October 1, 2019. She was inspired by Mattie's poem "The Tiger Fights a Dragon in the Purple Sun," and after reflecting on how the poem's message touched her heart, she responded by painting the beautiful "My Tiger of Peace."

Yasmin then chose to go to the next level and reach out with the message - inviting teenage young ladies with their mothers and friends to come to her studio to learn more about Mattie and his messages of hope and peace. Everyone then responded by creating their own peace expressions. Mama Peace, Jeni Stepanek, was on hand to chat and paint with everyone, enhancing what was already a powerfully inspirational day.

Reflect, respond, reach out - these are the criteria for becoming Peace Certified by the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation. Yasmin intends to continue promoting peace in the Americus community by hosting quarterly peace-themed paint parties where people can talk about how to achieve peace in our society and foster an artist's camaraderie towards peace. She plans for these parties to serve as fundraisers for Mattie's Foundation. She also wants to host free classes for elderly members of the community to help combat isolation and let them know they matter. After receiving her Peace Certification from Laura Bauer, Executive Director of the Foundation, Yasmin said, "If such a young Mattie could have such a beautiful vision, the least we can do is promote his message."

Americus-Sumter County Arts Council becomes Peace Certified. "Hope through Heart-songs" is a partnership between Americus Arts and the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation. After learning about Mattie's poetry and messages of hope and peace for our world, Americus Arts member Brooks Nettum was drawn to Mattie's writings about Heart-songs. She met with Laura Bauer, Executive Director of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek



Yasmine's Art Class



Americus Arts Board Chair Todd Lunneborg with Peace Certification

Foundation, and brainstormed ideas around having area teens create individualized "I am" statements to reinforce the concept of purpose, our "reason for being", and share these with others by painting their "I am" statements on tiles that will become a traveling mosaic displayed at area schools, libraries, and churches throughout the community.

Americus Arts collaborated with LaToya Ross of the Southwest Georgia Children's Alliance to identify teens to participate in the "Hope through Heart-songs" workshop. Other area supporters attending

were Americus Arts Board Member and Sumter County High School teacher Letitia Williams, and Truancy Director for Juvenile Court Stephen Woodson. CEO and Chief Peace Officer of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation, Jeni Stepanek, brought a powerful message of hope and purpose to the teens, encouraging them to explore ways to seek, make, and bring peace to themselves, their families, their friends, and their community. Joining Jeni and Laura from the Foundation were Board Members Barry McConatha and Marc Birnbach. Brooks Nettum, Phyllis

Smith and Geri Nelson assisted the teens with the art portion of the workshop. The mosaic created was debuted at the Americus Arts Gallery in Downtown Americus during First Friday events on March 6.



Yasmin Hasnain's Peace Certification



'I am' mosaic created by area teens on display at Americus Arts Gallery

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