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Artist Donates ArtPrize Top 25 Finalist “Let Go” to Kent County Courthouse

GRAND RAPIDS – When Pamela Alderman created “**Let Go**” for ArtPrize in 2017, she was looking to impact the audience with a large interactive piece. Alderman’s work, an ArtPrize Top 25 Finalist, is a beautiful seascape on five large wood panels that includes three Plexiglas figures that transform as you move around the artwork. The creation includes an opportunity to write a note, crinkle it, then throw it “into the sea” – in essence, **Let Go**. Recently she found a way to continue the impact of “**Let Go**” – she donated the piece to the Kent County Courthouse, where it has a new life.

During her nine years of ArtPrize experience, Pamela’s interactive pieces included works on cancer, bullying, and autism. But it was her work on human trafficking that drew the attention of Judge Patricia Gardner. “I first met Pamela when she presented her 2014 piece “**The Scarlet Cord**” to the Manasseh Advisory Group at Wedgwood two years ago. Following that meeting, Pamela allowed her film about human trafficking to be used by probation staff when working with girls who endured sexual exploitation. She and I discussed my interest in working with delinquent girls and the formation of Girls Court and girl-specific group counseling experience called Girls Truth Group.”

In September 2017, just months after the formation of Girls Court (a multi-disciplinary approach to serving female youth offenders), Judge Patricia Gardner took graduates of the program to the Amway Grand Plaza for a celebration dinner followed by a meet-and-greet with Pamela. That meeting helped several participants, as they each wrote notes of what they wanted to let go - then threw the notes into the work. Some of the girls cried as they let go of something that hurt them in the past. “All of the girls were moved by the power of the moment in listening to the artist and letting go of negative behavior and moving on from an intensive counseling experience to successful completion of probation,” Judge Gardner recalled. “It was honestly one of those moments that I thought would be a good educational experience, but it was far more meaningful than I could have imagined.”

The work was installed this month on the fifth floor of the Kent County Courthouse. “The work we do in this Courthouse often addresses personal struggles or difficult circumstances faced by good people, families and children,” said Judge T.J. Ackert of the 17th Circuit Court Family Division. Judge Ackert, who has known Pamela Alderman for many years, added, “Pamela’s work expresses a theme of healing and restoration, and this painting symbolizes the challenging work to restore their lives people engage in every day in this Court. Artistically, the placement of the painting outside our community room looking west over the city appropriately reflects the waves of the Grand River and the undulating architectural roof-line of DeVos Place – accentuating the peaceful movement from difficult times to a thriving existence!”

During ArtPrize, seventy thousand visitors wrote their own “**Let Go**” notes and added them to the work. “Artists create pieces for ArtPrize in hopes of speaking to a lot of people,” Pamela says. “This work is emotional. As an artist, my soul is rendered into that work. I hope people connect with the work because it’s relevant. It gives voice to people’s struggles and encourages healing.” More about the piece can be found at www.watercolorbypamela.com/artprize2017.htm.

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