

Creative Genes

NORTH STATE ARTIST
DEBBIE DIESTLER



SOME SAYINGS just don't prove true, like, "Those who can, do, and those who can't, teach." Many teachers teach because their passions must be shared and carried on to new generations. Debbie Diestler has used her artistic talents to teach and inspire and demonstrate the pleasures of creating. She taught elementary school in the Pacheco School District for 26 years, incorporating art in her classrooms and in district-wide productions. Now, in her retirement, she continues to encourage people from ages 9 to 90 to explore their artistic interests.

Diestler grew up immersed in the world of art and fashion with parents who introduced their three children to a full range of visual and performing arts. Her father worked for Levi Strauss and her mother had a flair for fashion and interior design. They brought to their family a sense of color and design, pattern and texture. Diestler's sister, Julie Cohn, is a well-known Bay Area watercolorist and brother Steven Cohn is a professional jazz musician. Their father collects the work of Bay Area figurative artists and his collection is regularly included in local art tours.

Growing up in a rich creative environment gave Diestler her inner passion, but as a shy and insecure youngster, she didn't feel talented. She connected with children as she became a young adult and felt drawn to teaching. She says she was "too practical to be a professional artist." However, as a teacher, she wove "all the things I love into history, math and the other subjects." She coordinated the visual and performing arts for Pacheco School District for several years and was hired back for two years even after she retired.

Still full of artistic passion, Diestler has spent her retirement years refining her own "artistic voice." She took some art classes in high school and college and has never stopped learning along her life journey. She continues to take classes and spends time with other artists, including sister Julie, honing techniques and sharing creative interchange. Diestler says in her website biography that she "finds complete and utter joy working with color in watercolor, acrylic, ink and beautiful papers. There are always unexpected creations and gratifying surprises in every artistic endeavor." ▶

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North State artist and art instructor Barbara Enochian says of Diestler, "Some artists do 'art for art's sake,' but Debbie does 'art for heart's sake.'" Enochian says Diestler is "dedicated to sharing the joy of painting with others." Diestler, who calls her art business Heartspectrum, partnered for three years with Compass Shining Care at Grace Place in Redding where she offered art classes to groups of all ages who, according to Program Coordinator Colleen Nelson, "walked away feeling they ... made new friends with the same desire to learn to paint and had a lot of fun learning about art, the artist and friendship."

Diestler incorporates Turtle Bay's Art Masterpiece Program, using art portfolios of famous artists as focal points and inspiration for her students. Her most recent teaching opportunity has been as a contracted artist with Santa Rosa City School District, where twice a year she works with at-risk students in five middle schools. "These kids have changed my life," she says.

A featured artist from January to September this year at Redding's City Hall, Diestler's "Koiful" painting was chosen to be displayed on a 48-by-64-inch metal screen in the entrance to the Redding Library. Kimberly Niemer, director of City of Redding Community Services, describes the space as a welcoming "warm-up," more like an atrium as visitors enter the library. Brenna Bowers, art facilitator for Art in the City, chose to showcase Diestler's work on the first floor because it is "colorful, dynamic and different."

"My passion for art is only exceeded by my love and devotion to God and my family," says Diestler. She says she paces herself, but likes to let God take the lead to plan her next activity. Diestler has a collage class slated for September 11 at North Valley Art League. •

www.heartspectrum.com



Sandie Tillery Creating a picture with words has been Sandie's small claim to fame for a good part of her life. A degree in journalism from San Francisco State University opened early professional writing opportunities. Now, as a long-time North State resident, she delights in discovering and describing wonderful people, places and events from this part of the world.

