

Prints, posters and original art bring color, connections to Framingham social services agency



Jim Cuddy, executive director of the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, looks at artwork in a stairwell at SMOC headquarters in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung

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Posted May. 1, 2016 at 8:00 AM

FRAMINGHAM - Even before the South Middlesex Opportunity Council moved its offices to a newly renovated Avery-Dennison factory building on Bishop Street, executive director Jim Cuddy knew he wanted a brighter space.

Six years ago, to bring life to SMOC's old rundown leased offices on Howard Street, Cuddy began decorating with a variety of prints and posters that has now expanded to a collection including original works.

Before, Cuddy said, people would decorate their individual spaces, but the place still felt sterile - not the warm environment he wanted for the human services organization that helps individuals and families with a variety of needs.

"We have a lot of folks who come here who are really struggling with their own life challenges. What do you want the environment to say to them?" Cuddy said.

After two years in the new 48,000-square-foot office building at 7 Bishop St., which was purchased and renovated at a cost of \$5 million, Cuddy has filled what he calls a "tremendous amount of wall space" with art on every floor.

It's all from donations, and although he doesn't know the worth of the entire collection, "It's worth a lot to us," he said.

Sprinkled among the prints of pieces by Picasso, Frida Kahlo and Mark Rothko are a few more local works of arts, including one collaboration between Kellie Weeks, a Fitchburg artist, and Framingham artist Scout Austin. There are also original works that have been exhibited at the Danforth Art museum, selected by Matt Lane, SMOC executive management officer, who said he was looking for "something that was a little different from what we had."

Besides prints of original paintings, the walls are covered with photographs of families, activists and artists, as well as inspirational quotes. The words of Nelson Mandela, Frances Perkins, John Coltrane, Coretta Scott King and Barack Obama line meetings rooms, stairwells and hallways.

Alexander Golob, a Boston University student from Wellesley, painted a mural on a first-floor wall, titled "Honoring the Past." The work transitions from a Caribbean scene to the rocky shores of New England and then a brick building inspired by SMOC's exterior. Golob incorporated Haitian tin art - also used near the desks of SMOC employees who work with children - into the seascape.

The goal of the mural, said Golob, was "to show that (newcomers) also have a new home here in Framingham."

“(The mural) reflects the cultural diversity that we’re supposed to be all about,” Cuddy said.

The brightness of SMOC’s new offices, the 3-D nature of the tin art, and the inclusion of outdoor sculptures also encourage interaction from children who visit SMOC with their parents. Cuddy said he has seen several children dragging their mothers toward a new metal leopard sculpture that sits on its hindquarters and stretches onto a wall of the building; it’s the perfect prop for a quick family photo-op.



Visitors can relax by this outdoor garden at South Middlesex Opportunity Council's headquarters in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung



A portrait of the Dalai Lama with one of his quotes at South Middlesex Opportunity Council headquarters in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung



South Middlesex Opportunity Council Executive Director Jim Cuddy talks about the artwork that is displayed all over the social services agency's headquarters on Bishop Street in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung



Haitian tin art is one of the artworks that add color to the offices at the South Middlesex Opportunity Council's headquarters in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung



Art lines the room as Taryn Barrows, standing, facilitates a practice in communications skills for a basic beginner level English as a Second Language class at South Middlesex Opportunity Council headquarters in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung



Art is displayed on the walls of a room set up for an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at South Middlesex Opportunity Council headquarters in Framingham. Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/ Allan Jung



Wellesley artist and Boston University student Alexander Golob with his mural at South Middlesex Opportunity Council's headquarters on Bishop Street in Framingham. Courtesy Photo