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ART AND ARTISTS

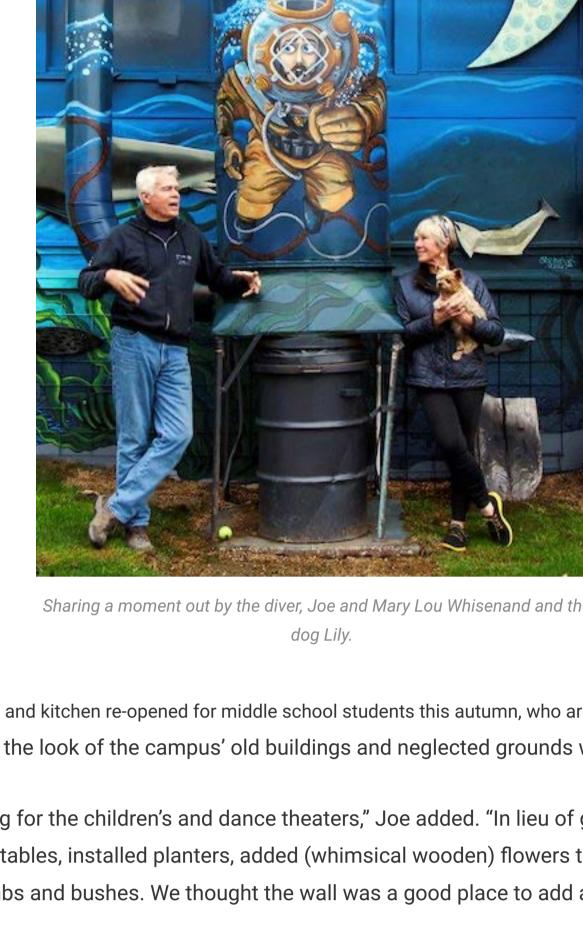
A convergence of talent

By KATE POSS | WITH PHOTOS BY DAVID WELTON — October 16, 2021 — Updated: October 21, 2021 — © 2 Comments © 8 Mins Read

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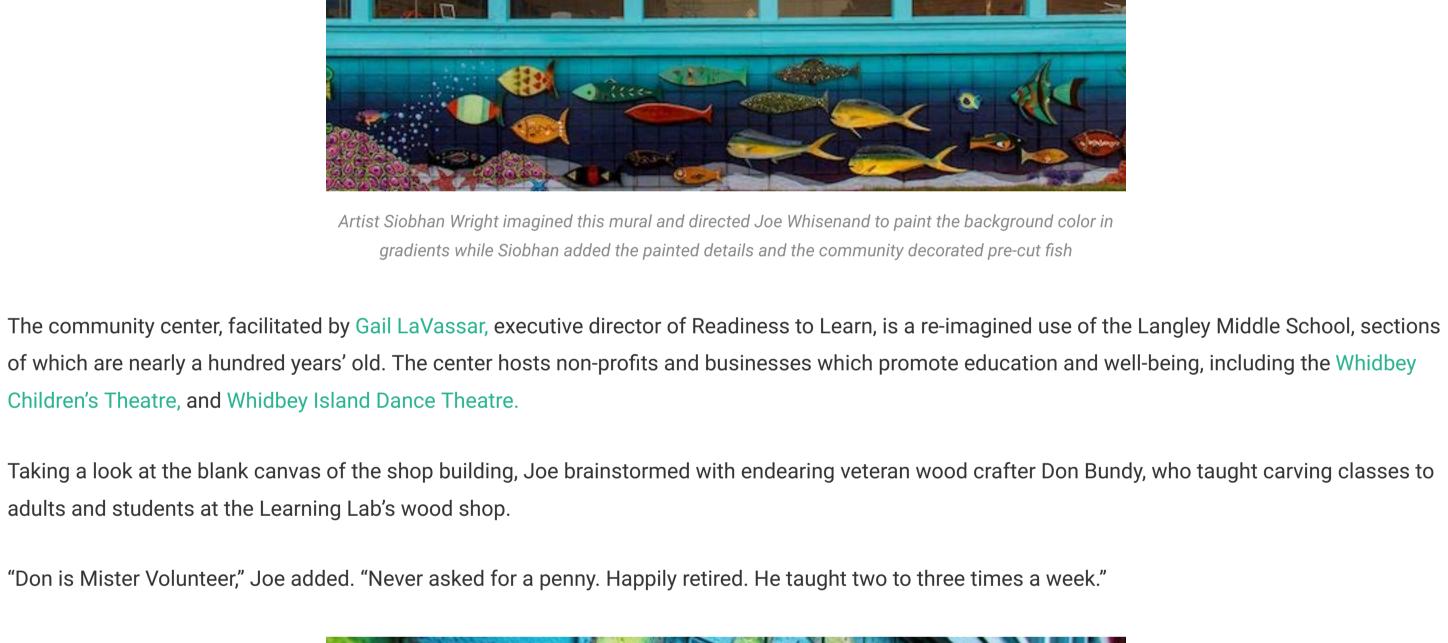
Whisenand, who, with his wife Mary Lou Whisenand, run the Learning Lab at Langley under the umbrella of the Living Design Foundation. Non-profit

the public in January 2022, subject to state Covid regulations.



Jill Clark, a friend of the Joe and Mary Lou Whisenand, donated this fanciful ceramic fish. Siobhan Wright

painted the sea anemone and bubbles.

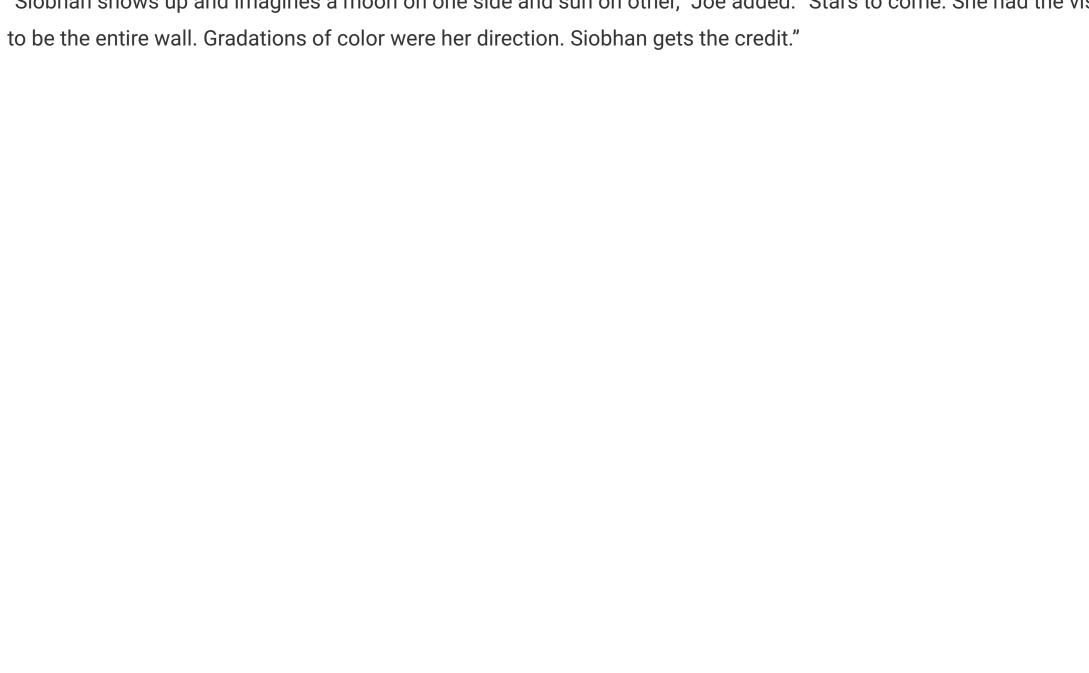




Precutting wooden blank fish forms, the men invited family and friends to decorate them. Joe then sealed them with weatherproof resin and fixed them

What happened next was a convergence of talent that took a flaking, boring, beige facade at the South Whidbey Community Center to a vibrant gallery

to hog wire fencing along the wall.



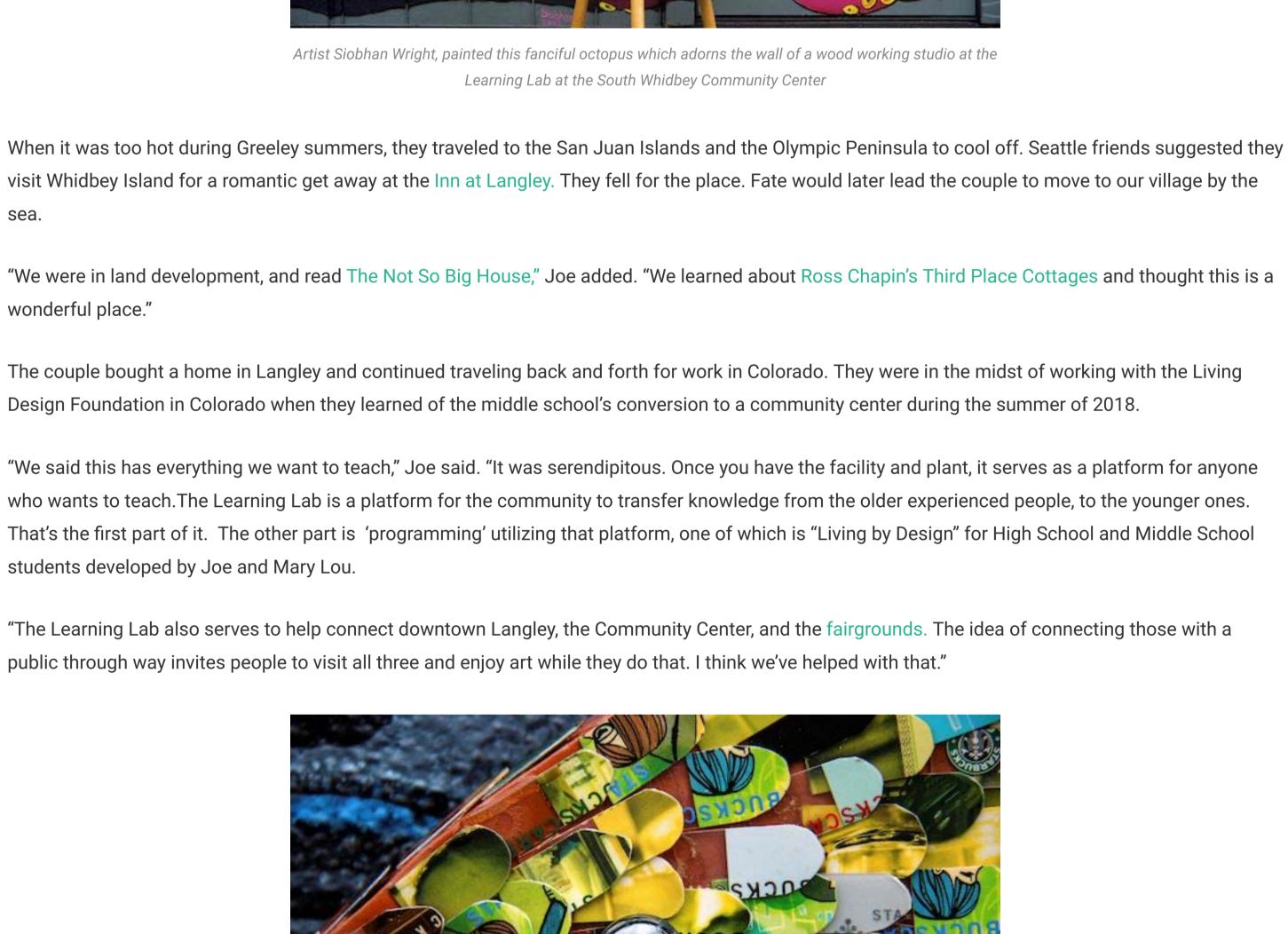
A whimsical sun shines down on a giant octopus, created by artist Siobhan Wright for the classroom wall belonging to the Learning Lab, part of the Living Design Foundation at the South Whidbey Community Center

Now the wall merges from a deep blue to lighter blue to yellow-pink and light blue along the overhang. Siobhan, who painted the popular butterfly wings

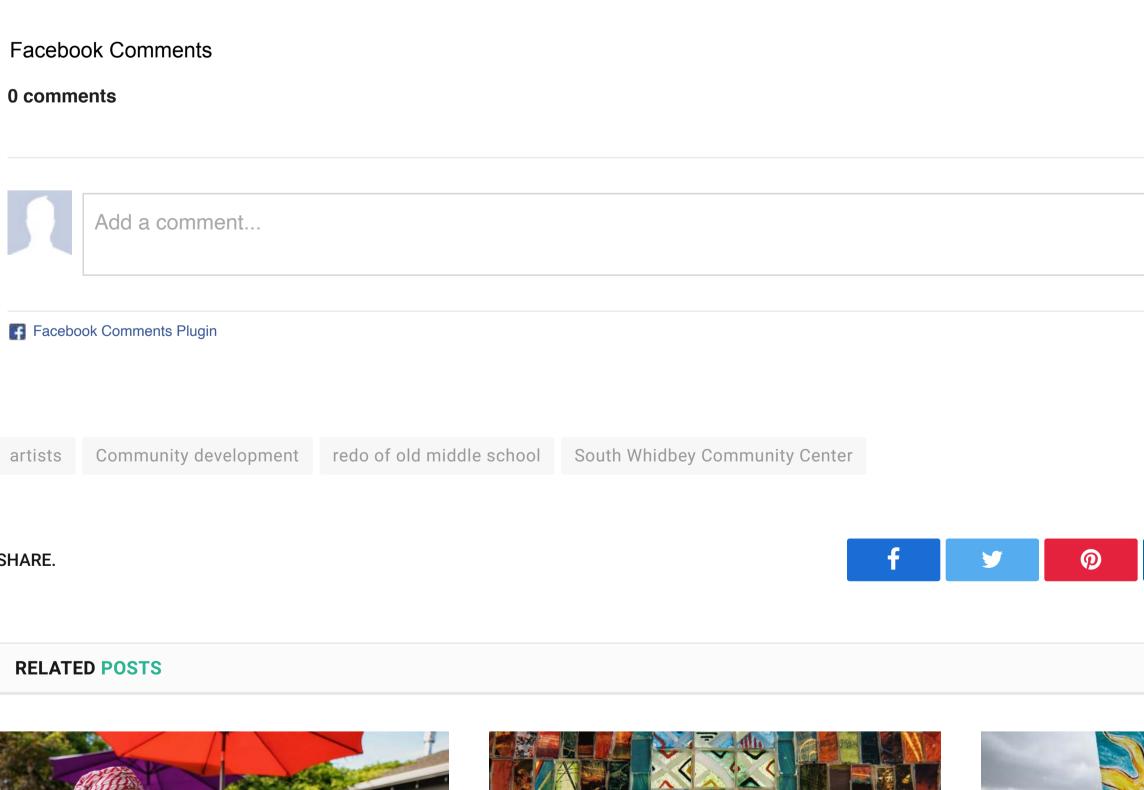
photo op board nearby the former Dog House on First Street, let her imagination for the shop wall flow into a full-on mural with a smiling sun on one end

of the building and a whimsical half moon on the other. They are joined by an octopus, sea anemones, a Great White shark, and a perplexed

mustachioed man in an old-timey diver's suit.



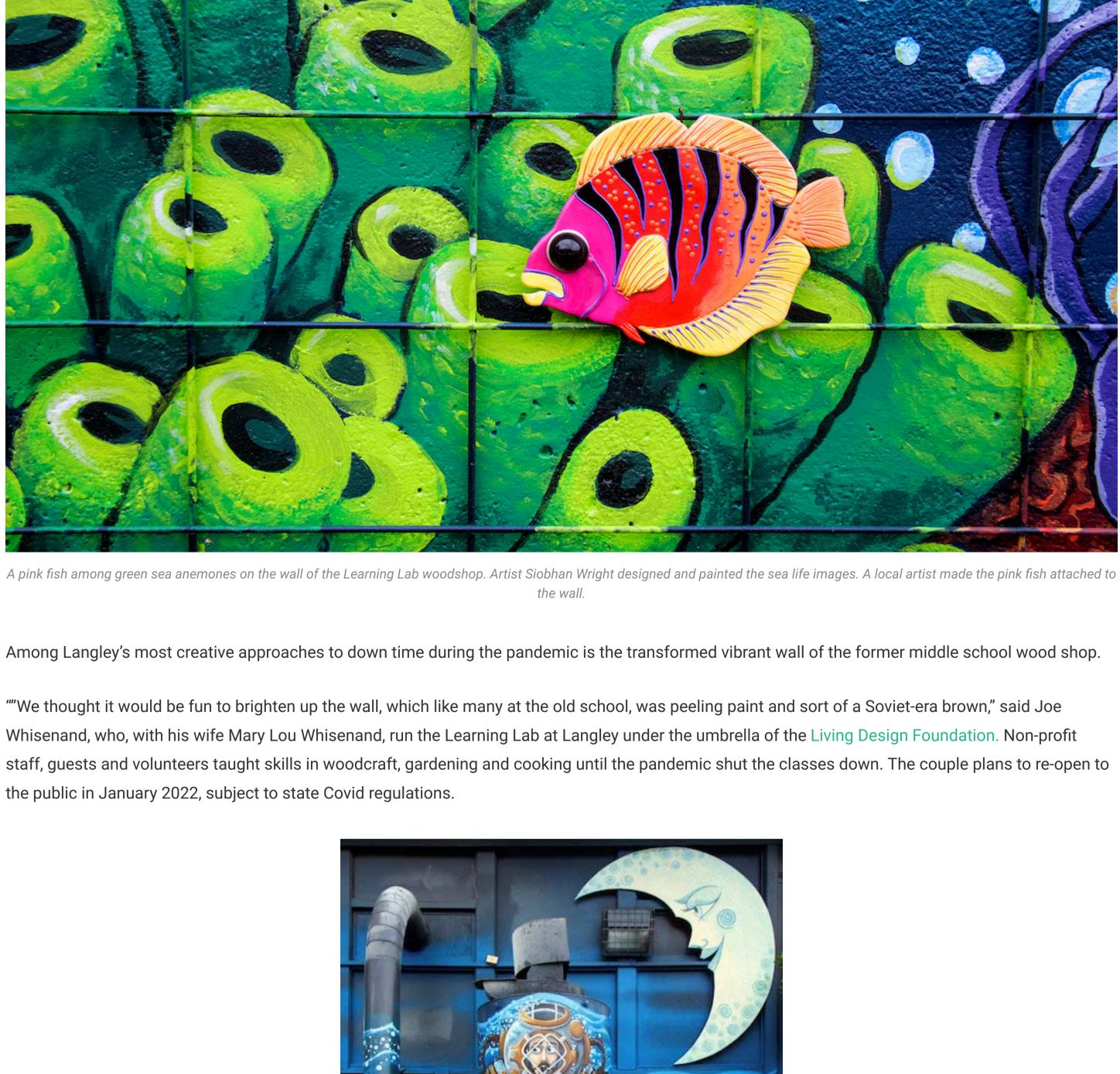
Artist Nancy Looram used Starbucks Coffee gift cards to make scales for this decorative fish



September 29, 2022 August 29, 2022 August 20, 2022 **2 COMMENTS** Cynthia on October 24, 2021 7:39 pm Wonderful mural, and a great story, Thanks again, Kate and David! REPLY >

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Kate Poss | With Photos by David Welton on October 29, 2021 10:48 am They're a great asset to Langley. REPLY > Enter your comment here...



Sharing a moment out by the diver, Joe and Mary Lou Whisenand and their

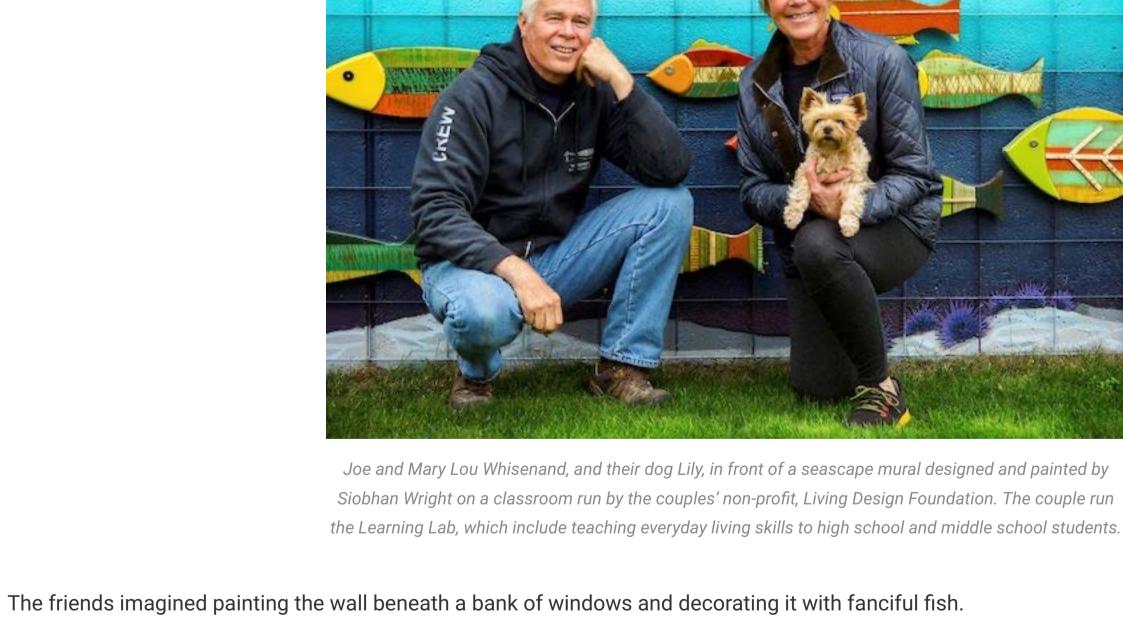
Meanwhile, with the help of volunteers, the shop and kitchen re-opened for middle school students this autumn, who are augmenting their industrial arts skills in cooking and wood shop. The couple imagined refreshing the look of the campus' old buildings and neglected grounds would improve visitors' experience. "The parking lot gets full of parents parking for the children's and dance theaters," Joe added. "In lieu of giving public classes, we began making improvements to the area. We built picnic tables, installed planters, added (whimsical wooden) flowers to the garden shed. We pruned the old elm tree and shrubs, and took out trailers full of limbs and bushes. We thought the wall was a good place to add art."

Children's Theatre, and Whidbey Island Dance Theatre. adults and students at the Learning Lab's wood shop.

Wood crafters Joe Whisenand and his friend Don Bundy precut fish and asked their friends to decorate

them. They art adorns the shop wall of the Learning Lab, part of the Living Design Foundation at the South

Whidbey Community Center



"We approached this project knowing Langley has a lot of talent," Joe added. "As the fish started going up, people noticed. Soon word got around. Artists like Kéké Cribbs, Ron Adams, and his wife Nancy Loorem Adams added fish. Nancy took one of the blanks, an angelfish, to Siobhan Wright."

wall of color featuring more than six dozen whimsical fish. The Learning Lab wall now brings a sense of joie de vivres to visitors.



It was this angel fish, decorated by Siobhan Wright, with the words: "It's okay to be different — that way the

Faeries will recognize you," that inspired the fanciful mural on the former middle school shop building.

Siobhan then designed and painted the scenes on the shop building.

Artist Siobhan Wright reimagined the classroom wall as a scene from

the sea with this old-timey diver she designed and painted along with

the half moon gazer. On the right is former SWHS art teacher Don

Wodjenski's gray striped fish.

"[Nancy] gave me a blank fish," Siobhan wrote in an email. "I painted it and Joe and Mary Lou liked the whimsical style. They asked if I would paint the

Community development in partnership with their realtor/development business formed the foundation of Whisenands' professional experience for 30

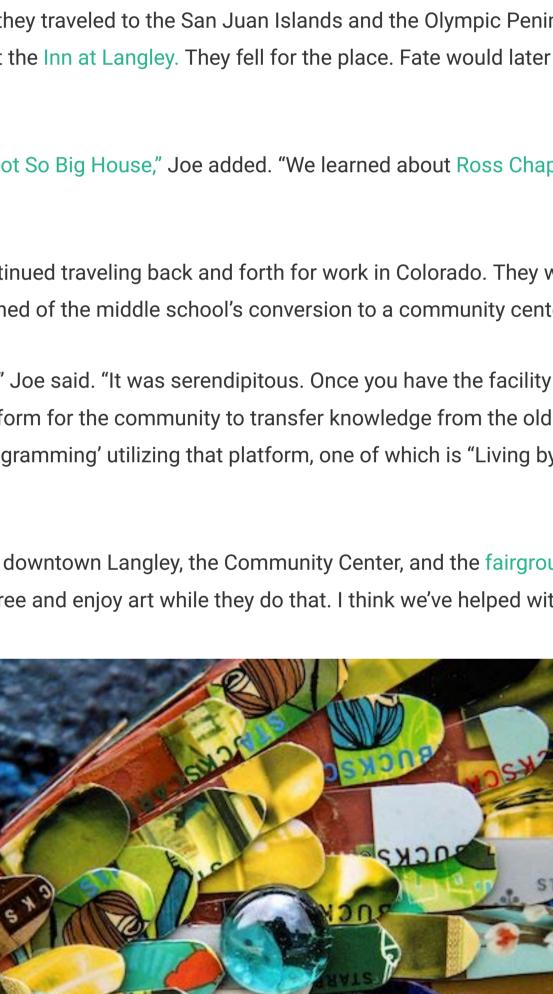
years when they lived in Greeley, Colorado. They founded the Living Design Foundation there, teaching real life skills to at-risk youth.

background for the fish. It blew up from there. It gave me a nice art project to do for summer."

sea.

wonderful place."

students developed by Joe and Mary Lou.



Now the wall is home to fish made by a spectrum of artists aged 8 to 88. The community is invited to create a fish to add to the school. Donations to the Living Design Foundation are appreciated. Joe envisions the art to be rotating; perhaps senior high school students could create fish for a future 'gallery' that would fund an end-of-year-trip.

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"I think this place is ripe for ideas," Joe said. "All will be welcome."

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