

STEAM Team Brings Public Art to Lake Thoreau

By: Abigail Fundling



In July, Reston welcomed Connie's Quilt, a new temporary public artwork realized by the South Lakes High School STEAM Team. This annual project is presented by Public Art Reston, Reston Association, and South Lakes High School STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) Team. Each year, the students create a large scale artwork that is installed on the Lake Thoreau spillway for up to five months, consulting professional artists and engineers while gaining experience in both conceptual and technical skills.

"The STEAM Public Art program at SLHS has grown to become a much anticipated event," says Marco Rando, professional artist and the teacher guiding the STEAM Team program. "The students are ecstatic about the communal anticipation. They place considerable pressure on themselves to deliver a professional work of art. The senior members are seasoned to know now, that as the sculpture's structural integrity is tested in the school parking lot, unforeseen problems will arise. When creating a temporary sculpture of this scale, whether you're a professional or a student, the challenge



is the same. Every aspect [of the artwork] must be created and engineered from design to assembly. I see this process of discovery and development as one of the most powerful learning experiences for any individual."

This year's sculpture, Connie's Quilt, is made from over 200 rings of white tubing strung together to create an organic and kinetic sheet suspended over the lake. The STEAM Team describes Connie's Quilt as follows: "The artwork comprised of many parts is representative of our societal fabric and the importance of connectivity between people. Connie's Quilt sets out to dispel the myth of the "self-made man" and identify the reality that nobody gets where they are without support from family and friends. The rings of this artwork represent how every individual is connected, even the rings not part of the main sheet that dangle by the grasp of other rings belong to the whole."

The artwork was named for Marco Rando's Aunt Connie who he considered to be his 'other mother.' She passed away in April. The students agreed it was a fitting memorial. "Connie taught me much of what I pass on to students—the qualities of a giving personality," says Marco.

The 2018 STEAM Team includes: Kimi Nacu, Leslie Mills, Amira Kirwan, Lily Vogel, Harrison Cahn, Phoebe Liu, MacKenzie Krider, Sabrina Carstens, Levi Park, Catherine Lashley, Samantha Busch, ShaKeira Conely, Sarah Mamros, Marley Elmore, Morgan Ryan, Zayyan Budiman, and Alisha Basra.

In addition, many others gave a hand along the way, including alumni. It is thanks to generous supporters that the Lake Thoreau Spillway project with the South Lakes High School STEAM Team celebrates five years.

Public Art Reston was founded in 2007 by Reston civic and community organizations and leaders. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that imagines public art throughout Reston that inspires the community and engages the mind and senses. www.publicartreston.org