

Gift from Elon to Newcomers School shares feather's story

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

(Updated 2:40 am)

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Special to the News & Record

Elon students in a beginners' art class spun global threads into their class quilt project in January, offering it as inspiration to children who are new to the country and the English language.

Each student in the Elon winter term class, "Story Magic: When Words Ignite Images," worked with textiles – dyeing and cutting the material – to create a story about a feather that travels the world. The students presented this five-paneled quilt to the Newcomers School for immigrants and refugees in Greensboro in a ceremony Feb. 20.

As an added effort to show the students that their presence in the community is appreciated, the Elon class incorporated the word "welcome" into the panels in more than 100 different languages.

Jake Henry, principal of the Newcomers School, said that a story told with pictures is a great tool because his students are just learning English. Also, the medium hits home for a lot of them.

"A lot of our students come from backgrounds where they worked in textiles, so they can relate with the images they see on this quilt right away," he said.

The panels are vibrant and colorful, with mural-like pictures of the feather and its journeys at the top and small rectangles of text at the bottom, so that when the students do learn to read, they'll be able to delve even deeper into the story.

"The story ties in with the different cultures of our kids, so it's a perfect fit," Henry said. The school is a newcomer itself, being in its second year of operation, and has pupils from 42 different countries.

The instructor for the class, adjunct art professor Peg Gignoux, reached out to an art teacher at the Newcomers School because she knew of its mission of building literacy through the arts.

The panels now hang above the bookshelves in media center at the Newcomers School on Friendway Road in Greensboro.

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