

Turkish artist hosts Claremont fundraiser for quake victims

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Days after a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake ravaged Turkey and parts of Syria on February 6, Turkish artist and Claremont resident Arzu Kastal decided to spring into action — halfway across the globe.

To help raise funds for disaster relief efforts, the Claremont Graduate University alumna created a group art show, “You Are Not Alone!” A free and public opening reception takes place from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, April 14 at Claremont Heritage’s Ginger Elliott Gallery, 840 N. Indian Hill Blvd. The gallery will remain open Saturday, April 15 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday, April 16 from 1 to 3 p.m.

“When I saw the devastation in my homeland, I looked for a meaningful way to help,” Kastal wrote in a statement. “I knew it had to be through art and I am glad our local artists felt the same.”

The show will feature works by Kastal and about 30 other local artists including Greg Rook, John Sollom, and Lee Hill.

The February 6 quake rocked southern and central Turkey and neighboring Syria, bringing down thousands of structures and killing more than 50,000 people.

“When I heard about the earthquake, I gave a completely human response,” Kastal said. “For a couple of days, I was in a shock because it’s not something that you expect and your first response is trying to reach your fam-



Artist Arzu Kastal at Claremont Heritage’s Ginger Elliott Gallery on March 28. Courier photo/Andrew Alonzo

ily. I learned cities were impacted with these earthquakes, and three of them were near my hometown,” she said.

She finally received word about five days after the quake that her family and friends were safe. Relief efforts had begun.

“My first reaction was sending emails,” she said. “I think I wrote 400 emails to people that I know and I wanted them to send money to some specific organizations.”

Kastal then thought of ways to weave her art into her efforts. With support from Claremont Heritage, its executive director David Shearer, and The Arts Area, the art show came together in a matter of weeks.

Kastal hopes to raise as much money as she can to benefit organizations such as Direct Relief, Turkish Philanthropy Funds, and the Bridge to Türkiye Funds.

“Anything will help,” Kastal said.

Kastal said the pieces at the Ginger Elliot show would be priced from \$50 to \$2,000. There will also be opportunities for attendees to donate directly to relief agencies, she added.

Earthquake damage in Turkey has been estimated at \$84.1 billion.

“Because of this, I thought I should do something for the long-term recovery,” Kastal said.

For more details email arzukastal@gmail.com.



“Sisterhood,” by Arzu Kastal, is part of the group show “You are not alone,” which opens April 14 at Claremont Heritage’s Ginger Elliot Gallery. Courier photo/Andrew Alonzo



John Sollom’s “Splendid Fairy Wren” is part of the group show “You are not alone,” which opens April 14 at Claremont Heritage’s Ginger Elliot Gallery. Courier photo/Andrew Alonzo