



Talk of the town

By David Delcore

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Brick works?

BARRE — Water-soaked bricks from the repetitively flooded basement of Studio Place Arts figure prominently in a student art show that just opened and will soon close at the nonprofit community visual arts center best-known by its acronym: SPA.

The pop-up exhibit — “Glancing in the Rearview Mirror” — opened Wednesday, runs through Saturday and makes good use of waste bricks that were part of a crumbling basement wall in a building that has been a fixture in downtown Barre for nearly 140 years.

What do you do if you have a sudden surplus of bricks that aren’t really good for much anymore?

Well, if you're Sue Higby, SPA's veteran executive director, you encourage an art teacher like, say, Spaulding High School's Danielle Berge, to turn some of them into a class project.

That's what Higby did last fall, and after Berge bit, she persuaded Eirene Mavodones, the art teacher at Barre City Elementary and Middle School to take some of the bricks for use by her students. Giuliano Cecchinelli II also made brick work part of the curriculum for students in his design and fabrication class at the Central Vermont Career Center.

Cecchinelli's students carved the old bricks — turning them into everything from a 1970 Ford Mustang and a three-legged fox, to a brick hot dog nestled in a limestone bun with yellow wire for mustard.

Berge's high school students went the multimedia route. The decorated bricks — one is a boom box and another is a forest floor covered in colorful mushrooms — are the stars, but there are other components of the pieces.

Mavodones' eighth-graders relied mostly on paint, though one used some Band-Aids in her attempt to embrace the "resiliency" theme created by her teacher. Others took the theme less literally: A bear, a bee, a butterfly, a cake and SpongeBob SquarePants are among the 38 entries from BCEMS.

The exhibit features a total of 56 pieces that those who visit SPA today and Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., which is when Higby will need to reclaim the first-floor classroom for use as a classroom, and the bricks will be returned to the student artists.