

DSS investigator painting with a purpose

CANTON — Christina Adams, a support investigator at the St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services for 15 years, has always been an artistic and creative person at heart.

However, her job is to testify in cases, so there's usually not much room for creativity on the job.

Adams, who is working on earning her graphic design degree at SUNY Canton, noticed that kids would look a little scared walking through the halls of the Department of Social Services building during visits.

"The place is a little overwhelming and institutional looking," Adams said.

As part of her college design program, Adams was able to

choose a project that encompassed everything she's been learning.

"I chose to paint these murals for the visitation units. I thought these paintings would brighten it up a little for them," Adams said. "I chose to do some friendly cartoon creatures.

They're inviting, non-threatening and [in] bright colors to just attract their attention when they come in."

On her days off, you can find Adams working on her various murals throughout the halls of the building. She's put more than 100 hours of her own time into her project and is doing it all on her own dime.

"My goal is to do enough paintings on each floor at all the places children would come in, so they're greeted, no matter how they enter the building, with some friendly and welcoming art," Adams said.

"I think it's important for people to understand that art is important... just the simple process [of my paintings] can change an environment and change how people feel about being here."

Christina Adams, who has always been artistic and creative, paints a mural on the walls of the St. Lawrence County DSS building during time off from work.



Christina Adams paints the halls of the St. Lawrence County DSS building as a part of earning her graphic design degree. She decided to paint friendly murals for the children who visit the building.

The amazing impact of art

The reception to Adams' paintings has been nothing but positive from co-workers and families that visit the building.

"Parents will bring kids out to check out all the paintings, so it gives them a fun activity to do," Adams said. "There was just a father in here that was teaching his daughter how frogs were amphibians and how turtles were reptiles."

Her co-workers enjoy it, too. "Working here, I understand, can sometimes be kind of drab," Adams said. "Some people have said it really brightens up their day. Sometimes people just come out and watch me paint." Adams said that sometimes people can take art for granted.

"I think it's important for people to understand that art is important," Adams said. "When you're in a

place that's not creative or artistic, you feel like you don't need art for anything. But just the simple process [of my paintings] can change an environment and change how people feel about being here."

— Nicholas Newcomb

