

Art In Uncommon Places...

*Enhancing our community one
piece of art at a time.*

By Brit Macias

San Angeloans know about the vivid Paint Brush Alley, the mosaic pieces along the river, and the new multi-purpose Red Arroyo Trail with sculptures along the pathway, but most don't know where all of these unique parts of town originated.

When asked, most citizens assume the City is responsible for this artful beautification of San Angelo, when, in reality, we have Art In Uncommon Places to thank for it.

Artist and co-founder, Julie Raymond, tells CRN she had the keys to her studio the day she retired from twenty years of teaching twelve years ago. Raymond says she and the other volunteer artists simply have a passion for art and wanted to see it out in the public world where you wouldn't normally see art—uncommon places. "I wanted to appreciate some very incredible places that kind of go unseen" Raymond says.

Art In Uncommon Places (AIUP) began with a donated building, donated materials, and donated help. Still today, the studio is a not-for-profit entity that runs on donations, volunteers, and grants.

Their first project was to mosaic the vintage cars seen around town, completed with Roger Allen from the Chicken Farm, a chemist, and a plaster artist. Then came Paint Brush Alley, the pieces along the Concho River, pieces around town such as the runner on Bell Street, and the current work in progress—The Red Arroyo Trail.



“The Red Arroyo is great because you can get from one side of town to the other without entering all the traffic... and it has linked neighborhoods together that have never been linked before.”

The trail has taken three years to complete with the help of the community, trustees, and Joy Thomas of AIUP as well. Nearly \$500,000 worth of art—almost 50 pieces that Raymond’s husband installs himself—line the trail, with more to come.



The first 1-mile glowstone pathway in the nation is also along the trail. This was installed last year in the midst of 105 degree temperatures with the help of prisoners. The project was extremely labor intensive, Raymond says, as each ¾” glowstone was hand placed, then later “hunted for like Easter eggs” with a power wash to wash off the thin layer of concrete coating each stone. The project took two-and-a-half months to complete.

AIUP is working to have details regarding each piece of art along the trail written and placed next to the corresponding piece, so visitors can learn about the artist, the inspiration, and why the materials were chosen. For instance, the majority of the pieces are made with materials that can filter rain water.

AIUP is the originator and brains behind these ideas, though they do partner with the city to get their vision approved and ensure it is environmentally

sound. The City desires to plant wildflowers along the trail, they have donated benches to be redone by AIUP that will be regifted back to the City, and man-made water storage tanks have been dug along the Red Arroyo to gather rain water—and even attract a few misguided seagulls.



With these changes, San Angelo has seen much more foot traffic, with the hopes of bringing in even more, while rumors swell that we will be the “new Santa Fe” if the city progresses as it has been recently.

The things Raymond showed CRN around the art studio truly showed AIUP's heart for both art and their community, but a couple stood out the most, one being the mosaic fire truck sitting out front.

Raymond explained that this fire truck project was completed by the hands of the community. It took organized groups of 30 people working in two-hour shifts over a two-day period to complete the work.



Included in the community of hands turning the truck into a mosaic masterpiece was a Father and Son team. The father retired from the San Angelo Fire Department the same day his son entered the Department and they wanted to celebrate by working together on the artful fire truck.

Another standout was a set of stunning white and silver mosaics that Raymond explained were completed by a Mother and Daughter team—a mother and daughter who are both blind.

Not only has AIUP begun to enhance the very fabric of our great city, they are also putting on events for the community that showcase their work, but more importantly get the public involved.

September 10th, AIUP is putting on an event to announce their Open Air Museum along the Red Arroyo Trail to the world. The event lasts from 8am-10pm, and will feature Stone Carvers, Rock Stackers, Plein Air Artist, a \$1,000 prize Sculpture Design Challenge, Kids Creative Workshop, Food Trucks, an evening Cupcake & Spirits/Coffee Stroll, Yoga, the ARTful 5k fun run, a Bicycle Parade, and more.

For more information and new developments, or to donate, follow Art In Uncommon Places on Facebook and visit their [website](#).

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