

Young local artist is celebrated for creating Bridge Shelter mural

On Tuesday Nov. 30, City leaders held a reception to honor local Costa Mesa artist Valerie Mata, a former Back Bay High School student who created the artwork for a mural that is now displayed in the entrance lobby of the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter at 3175 Airway Ave.

On hand for the reception were Mayor John Stephens, Mayor Pro-Tem Andrea Marr, District 2 Council Member Loren Gameros, Assistant City Manager Susan Price and Newport-Mesa School Board Trustee Carol Crane. Also attending were the artist's family as well as her Back Bay High art teacher Cami Marseille and the school's principal Mike Wagner.



[Click here to watch a video of the reception.](#)

Mayor Stephens talked about the success of the Bridge Shelter and presented Mata with a proclamation to thank her for her efforts.

"We've created a bridge from homelessness and living on the streets to a better life," Mayor Stephens said. "And Valerie you've taken this ideal and incorporated the arts. And as you know we are the City of the Arts. Your artistry and your gift will give inspiration and will save lives and save souls."

In January of this year, the City's Cultural Arts Committee and City partner Trellis formed a committee to choose a mural for the Bridge Shelter entrance.

The mural committee consisted of Assistant City Manager Susan Price, former Outreach Manager Stacy Lumley, Parks and Community Services Recreation Supervisor Ashley Thomas, Outreach team leaders Natalie Basmaciyen and John Begin), Ian Stevenson of Trellis and Cultural Arts Committee Chair Charlene Ashendorf.

The intent for this piece of art is to convey the message, "we're better together" and illustrate how people experiencing homelessness, volunteers, donors, city leaders/officials, leaders from various organizations, churches, businesses and non-profits work together to make the shelter successful.

The committee reviewed about a dozen entries and unanimously chose Mata's artwork, which depicts a bridge to the future. She was awarded \$500 for the winning mural, which was sponsored by Trellis.

Both Stevenson from Trellis and Ashendorf also spoke about Mata's mural and what it meant to them and the committee.

Mata thanked her teacher and counselor at Back Bay High and said she can relate to those at the shelter because she and her family have also experienced hardships.

"We went through some really interesting times," she said. "But I really appreciate going through all that. I don't regret it at all. And now I'm here. So people like this can also be in better places."

The artwork was converted to wallpaper and installed on the Shelter wall by Mouse Graphics, a local Costa Mesa business.