

# PIERCE COLLEGE COMMISSIONS ARTIST TO HONOR FORMER LIBRARY EMPLOYEE

*Fort Steilacoom library will feature an artist's work at the start of the fall quarter*

By **NICK NELSON**  
Staff Writer

CHERYL KNEALE SERVED for nearly 20 years as a library serials technician here at the Fort Steilacoom campus. She passed away a little over three years ago in August, 2014. In honor of her exceptional service, on Nov. 15, 2016, a Pierce committee sent out a Request For Proposal (RFP) on the College Art Association website and at ArtShow.com.

“The purpose of this call for art is find artwork to display permanently within the Library in memory of the late library staff member Cheryl Kneale ... Not only was (Cheryl) devoted to libraries, she even raised a librarian, her daughter Ruth,” the

RFP stated.

In the RFP, the committee asked artists in the community for their artwork to be displayed in the library in honor of Kneale. The committee chose one out of the 35 that responded.

Susan Russell Hall, an artist whose studio is located in Lakewood, felt a connection when she saw the request. “This proposal is very personal to me, having just lost my own mother, also an artist, on December 23rd, 2016,” she wrote.

Although the RFP asked for completed works or works in progress, Hall presented a different idea to the committee. Her piece would consist of tea bags collected from the campus that would be flattened, ironed and formed into a “quilt” on a

canvas. In Hall’s proposal, she wrote, “Tea bags, to me, represent the time we spend sharing individual stories.”

“The whole committee came to the studio,” said Christie Flynn, dean of the library and Call for Art committee member. “The student (in the committee) said, ‘This is the one; it’s about all of us.’”

“I think this resonated with the student because it resonates community and connection,” Hall said.

In Hall’s piece, there is an estimated 300 tea bags. They are all adhered to the canvas with three pieces of string dividing each of them horizontally. The string is not tied at the ends. Hall described these as the “Threads of Connection.”

“The top of the string represents an



Art work was created using hundreds of tea bags.

open heart and an open mind. The bottom is open hands,” Hall said. “There’s one string for my story, one for yours and the story between us.”

“Also, the thread reminds me of book binding,” Hall said, in reference to a library setting. They also represent Kneale’s embroidery hobby.

Flynn explained where the tea bags for the piece came from.

Every third Thursday, Pierce staff is invited to have tea in the library at 3 p.m. “We provide a big pot of water and people bring tea bags and snacks,” Flynn said.

Not only did they collect teabags from these events, called “T33,” but multiple tea bags came from anonymous donors. A number of bags also came from Cheryl’s husband, as well as the donor who made the commission possible.

“The Pierce College Foundation received a donation for the purpose of commissioning artwork in memory of a former library employee,” said Deidre Soileau, executive director of the Foundation.

Money for the project also came from additional fundraising and an account the Foundation has that is specific to the library.

“I wanted to use (the money) for art,” Flynn said.

Part of the art piece will be displayed in the library outside of the library offices. The largest part will be hung on the wall outside of the silent study rooms. The tea bags will all be sealed onto the canvas.

“I wanted it to be accessible; nothing between the viewer and the art,” Hall said. “I want it to be real... This is a real thing.”

“Our students deserve the finest. They deserve real art,” Flynn added.

Hall also stressed more meaning behind her piece: mindfulness, being present of what we are doing and slowing down.

“My mom had just passed when I put in this proposal. It’s important to represent those who have passed and to take that time and think about how lucky we were to have that person in our lives,” Hall said.

## THE ART IS SCHEDULED TO BE UNVEILED IN THE LIBRARY ON SEPT. 26.



Matthew Wuscher/Contributing Photos