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Art for a Changing World

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Public Art Project Proposal

Still as of December 2018, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania is considered a “Nonattainment Area” within the United States due to our not meeting the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) federal fine particulate air pollution standards. On the 28th of this month, there will be a meeting to determine whether the county will have this unfortunate title removed. However, whether or not the county successfully reaches the standards for re-designation is besides the point; there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to make our air healthy and safe for residents of the county.

But what is the issue? Amongst other environmental problems, Lebanon County has very high levels of particulate matter pollution. The EPA defines particulate matter as a “mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air.” Some of these particles include dust, dirt, soot, and smoke. Some are large enough to be seen clearly, while others are far too small to be detected by the naked eye. The source of particulate matter is primarily chemical reactions in the atmosphere resulting from pollutants being emitted from power plants, industries and automobiles; however, they also arise from direct sources like construction sites, unpaved roads, fields, smokestacks or fires. HealthLinkBC states that short and long-term exposure to Particulate pollution can worsen existing conditions such as heart and lung disease. It also has been shown to increase sick days, emergency room visits, hospital stays, and deaths. Overall, the issue of particulate matter pollution has the possibility of slowly eroding the health of children, seniors, and anyone with existing health issues. For the safety of ourselves and future generations, it is imperative that we get the particulate pollution under control.

The purpose of *What Cannot be Seen* is to raise awareness for an issue that is quite literally invisible to us and therefore easy for us to overlook. Through informing and educating the general public within the area of the potentially damaging effects of particulate matter

pollution, I want to instill within the community the desire to continuously strive to live more environmentally conscious lifestyles and encourage others in their community to do the same.

Physically, *What Cannot be Seen* will be comprised of a two-room structure approximately 8' tall, 8' wide, and 20' long. This will create enough room for two approximately 8' by 8' by 10' rooms. The walls will be comprised of a wood frame covered with smooth, white, hardboard wall panels on the inside and outside. The roof of the structure will also be covered with these panels. Overall, the walls and roof will be approximately 3 inches thick and constructed in a way that the different sections of the structure can be easily disassembled. On the ceiling of both rooms will be comprised of a single LED panel that will illuminate the entire room and its contents. Another 3-inch-thick wall with a flush sliding door will separate the two rooms. There will be no floor within the structure. Within the first room will be individual pieces of white Nitelite thread hanging from the ceiling. The amount of string will be representative of the particulate matter pollution percentage within the air equivalent to a room of that size. The white string juxtaposed with the sleek white walls will make the thin string "disappear" within the room, representing the fact that Particulate pollution is something we may not be able to easily view. A small group will be gathered at the entrance where they'll view the room from the outside. Once the group is ready, they'll enter the room whereupon the ceiling lights will be replaced with black lights to illuminate the room along with the Nitelite thread, making the thread much easier to see; making the "invisible" visible. The group will then be motioned through the first room and asked to move into the second room. Within the second room will be a collection of infographics mounted on the walls explaining particulate matter pollution and the impact it has had on Lebanon County and its residents. The infographics will also provide the audience with different ways that they can go about reducing the amount of particulate matter they're contributing to the environment and other ways they can get involved in cleaning up the air we need to survive.

Works Cited

“Particulate Matter (PM) Basics.” EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, 14 Nov. 2018,
www.epa.gov/pm-pollution/particulate-matter-pm-basics.

“Particulate Matter and Outdoor Air Pollution.” HealthLink BC, 4 Sept. 2018,
www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/outdoor-air-pollution.