

Local woman's Valley Fire Photo Exhibit at American Canyon bank



Nature photographer Katherine Griffin, who lives part-time in American Canyon, but mostly in Hidden Valley Lake, poses with just some of the shots she took of last summer's terrible Lake County fires, which are on display and for sale at American Canyon's Umpqua Bank, 3417 Broadway, Suite J-2. An artist's reception is planned for 5 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan.

22. *Rachel Raskin-Zrihen — Times-Herald*

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AMERICAN CANYON >> Katherine Griffin said that busying herself with her camera kept the fear at bay, as she escaped the devastating fires that consumed much of Lake County and elsewhere over the summer of 2015.

The nature photographer, musician and composer, who lives most of the time in Hidden Valley Lake, experienced all three of the summer's wildfires, including the huge Valley Fire, and took photos of all of them. She's framed some, left some matted and unframed and made some into greeting cards. All of them are on display and for sale at American Canyon's Umpqua Bank, 3417 Broadway, #J-2, where an artist's reception is planned from 5 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 22, sponsored by the American Canyon Arts Foundation, of which the artist is a longtime member.

"I looked for beauty in the plumes of smoke and fire and the red skies and the planes fighting the fires," she

said. “There was a huge plume right behind the mountain I live on, and that’s when I started taking pictures. I saw melted fences. At one point, the sky went black.”

There are photos of all of this on display at the bank.

Some of the photos depict animals impacted by the blazes, and the proceeds of a raffle planned at the reception will benefit “the four-legged victims,” through an organization called Barks and Bubbles, which is dealing with fire refugee pets, Griffin and American Canyon City Councilmember and foundation president Mark Joseph said.

Refreshments at the event are being provided by local merchants, Starmont Winery and Vineyards, Thai Kitchen, Junction Brewery & Grill and Los Cantaros Taqueria. Raffle items include some of Griffin’s wildlife photos, as well as a copy of her DVD, “Music For the Mind and Heart” — alternative television for Alzheimer’s patients — a project Griffin created because her parents both suffered from the disease.

“When they could no longer relate to words, I was able to bring them joy through music and nature,” she said.

Griffin said that looking back, she can see now that enlisting a friend to drive her from safety, into the path of the so-called Cobb Fire, may have been one of the “stupidest” stunts she’s ever pulled. This fire actually reached Hidden Valley Lake and she was forced to evacuate, piling her dogs, her computer, her cellphone, camera and a few clothes into her car and encountering a gridlock traffic jam comprised of other fleeing residents. No one could escape the oncoming flames until police arrived to untangle the traffic, by opening the southbound lanes to northbound traffic even as the fire closed in. There are photos of this, as well.

Prices of the photos run from \$5 for a 5x7-inch card, or three for \$10 at the reception; \$40 for unframed photos and \$100 for framed ones, most of which will go toward recouping Griffin’s expenses for materials and other costs, she said.

“We encourage people to come to the reception on the 22nd from 5 to 9,” Joseph said.

For more information, visit amcanart.org or email amcanarts@gmail.com.

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