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Saturday, November 19, 2005

FOR HOME

Lake Conroe fish request is in

By HOWARD RODEN
COURIER STAFF

LAKE CONROE - The San Jacinto River Authority has increased its permit request to 30,000 white Amur fish to avoid the possibility of another hearing process if more grass carp are needed than originally thought to battle non-native aquatic vegetation on the lake.

The permit, submitted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the SJRA's hydrilla management plan

were presented to the TPWD Wednesday for review and approval. The plan, developed in conjunction with the TPWD, calls for stocking approximately 4,300 of the grass carp into Lake Conroe Feb. 15.

Details on the management plan were presented at a public hearing hosted by the TPWD and the SJRA Tuesday night at the Lone Star Convention Center.

Voracious eaters of hydrilla, the

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FISH FACTS

Who: The San Jacinto River Authority and Lake Conroe Association
What: The release of approximately 4,300 (sterile) white Amur
When: Feb. 15
Why: To control invasive, non-native aquatic vegetation
How much: Estimated \$30,000 (Initial batch)
Where: Commercial white Amur hatcheries
Amur facts: Native to northern China and reach nearly 4 feet in length and 35-40 pounds. Life expectancy is eight to 12 years, but some do

HEALING FOR NEW ORLEANS



Faith Harrison, bottom left, an artist and student at Montgomery College, along with help from her friends, family, faculty and members of the community, created a sand mandala outside of Building A at the college Friday in honor of New Orleans. The mandala is an ancient tool used for healing in various cultures including certain groups of native American Indians as well as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Staff photo by Nick Cenegy

Sand painting's life brief, dazzling

By NICK CENEY
COURIER STAFF

An air of tranquility fell over a group of artists and members of the community Friday afternoon in the atrium outside Building A at Montgomery College, while each made their mark delicately painting designs on the gray concrete walkway with vibrantly colored sands.

Under the soft-spoken guidance of art student Faith Harrison, a giant six-foot diameter sand painting, or mandala, took shape over a three-hour period in honor of the recovering city of New Orleans, post Hurricane Katrina.

Mandala, or 'sacred circle' in Sanskrit, is a practice rooted in a variety of cultures including Hinduism, Buddhism, as well as many native American Indians, which involves making

“After the hurricane, I was very touched by the devastation. I wanted to focus some healing energy there (New Orleans).”

Faith Harrison
Montgomery College art student

intricate pictures using sand, textiles, or other media. Mandalas use geometric shapes to convey messages.

For Harrison, however, Friday's mandala is more of a psychological approach to healing.

“The creation of this work is about coming together and holding the focus of creativity on New Orleans,” said Harrison. “After the hurricane, I was very touched by the devastation,” she said, “I wanted to focus some healing

energy there.”

The mandala, she explained, has a circular shape because it is symbolic of the circle of life, and like the sand painting itself, is created and later destroyed.

Despite having similarities to Buddhist and Hindu mandalas, she emphasized that her design did not adhere to a particular faith or culture, as mimicking any of them would be disrespectful to their ancient history.

Harrison and her group began the construction of the mandala with an outline and began laying sand down from the center out. Like life, she said, it has its embryonic start in the center and blossoms until it is finally returned back into a pile of dust.

The outline of the mandala took the form of a flower with petals, creat-

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ing sections that artists and passersby could decorate as they liked. To construct it, Harrison distributed special candlestick-size ink pens, that she had gutted and filled with different colors of sand. Many participants, however, chose to use their hands.

Among the sandy handed participants was Harrison's daughter Hannah, a David Elementary student, who adopted one of the mandala's sections to paint for herself, focusing on a violet and red crescent moon that she created, perhaps not catching the symbolism in her colorful tribute to the 'Crescent City.'

Aside from its healing properties, the project is also serving as Harrison's honors project for an advanced art class taught by Denise Lorenz. The mandala idea, she said, came to her about a year ago, then after Hurricane Katrina left New Orleans in its wake, she found her inspiration.

Professor Lorenz said that Harrison was tailor fit for the idea because of her background in alternative healing.

“We had done a very simple mandala in class a few semesters ago,” said Lorenz, “but this was all Faith's idea.”

Mandalas and other forms of healing have even piqued the attention of the college's nursing program in their research in helping to alleviate chronic pain and illness.

particular significance, said Harrison, because the past few years have shown a renewed interest in holistic and alternative healing in the western world.

Whether through school or work, Harrison is intimately tied to alternative medicine. She owns Faith's Healing Touch, a reflexology firm. She has been a reflexologist since

she was 17 years old in Upstate New York when, through the help of a neighbor who had reflexology in his heritage for generations, she guided her mother through a serious medical attack. She later became an apprentice to the neighbor, learning her trade.

After the final sand of the afternoon was set and pic-

tures were taken, Harrison read a few words about the majesty of New Orleans before ceremoniously sweeping the sands together from four corners.

“This is definitely a bit emotional for me,” said Harrison as the finite patterns of the design swirled into each other and her daughter swept them into a mute pile.

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