



FEATURE PRESS RELEASE

A former Vietnamese refugee celebrates her sponsor's legacy by using art to open up dialogue

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Zyp art gallery inspires young people to reflect on their social and political surroundings

CALMAR, Alberta - Dr. Nhung Tran-Davies, a former Vietnamese refugee, says her “passion project” - Zyp Art Gallery - is her own way of honouring one of her sponsor families, Hank and Tillie Zyp - who influenced her life tremendously.

In 1979, five-year-old Nhung and her family came to Canada as part of the Canadian government's refugee program. Hank and Tillie Zyp were among a group of five families to sponsor and welcome the Tran family to their newly adopted country.

The Zyps were humanitarians. Hank was an artist and Tillie, the passion, was the force behind the couple's social activism. In the 60's, the Zyps were among a few families who helped the local Indigenous Reserve by providing Indigenous children housing so that they could easily access high school. Hank and Tillie always had love, compassion, and appreciation for everyone they met. The Zyps served various communities including Indigenous Peoples, inner city, youth, immigrants, and marginalized Canadians.

In 1975 and '76, Hank and Tillie founded *Change for Children* and *Rainbow of Hope for Children*, two different NGOs, which continue today to fund global developmental projects concentrating in Africa, Caribbean Islands, and Central and South America.

Nhung believes their life is “inspirational,” and helped her to reflect on our world. “I became who I am because of who [Hank and Tillie Zyp] are.” The thought of starting an art gallery evolved in 2012 after Hank passed away. Nhung says she “wanted [to create] a place to inspire, to heal, and to challenge,” along with a professional platform for local artists. Zyp Art Gallery seeks to generate dialogue and inspire the youth to reflect on societal concerns.

The small-town physician remembers it was in the Zyps' home where she was introduced to the world of art. Seeing Hank's artworks on the walls of his house, Nhung fell in love with art and its power to communicate. While Hank introduced Nhung to the power of art, Tillie Zyp taught her to see the beauty and inspiration in people's lives and their struggles. For instance, one day Tillie found three boys breaking into her home. She asked them if they knew what they were doing with their life and offered them some soup. Three hours later, they were still in conversation and needless to say, those boys never attempted any break-ins again.

Nhung continues to admire their ability to see goodness in others. It's because of the Zyps, art became the centre of Nhung's life. The Zyps taught her to see art as a source of “healing, inspiring and as a medium for justice.”

Nhung reminisces about her conversations with both Hank and Tillie which always boiled down to the injustices in the world. "Those conversations made me aware, and gave me the drive and motivation to do something too."

Hank's words - *ordinary people can do extraordinary things* - stuck with Nhung. Nhung wants "young [people] to recognize that they have the power and ability to do extraordinary things with their lives." Today's youth should observe the beauty around "to reflect upon the social situations in the world and think about what their roles are in terms of how they fit into this greater scheme."

Besides the gallery, Nhung founded the Children of Vietnam Benevolent Foundation which provides hope and opportunity to the disadvantaged and orphaned children in Vietnam. In 2016, Nhung and a group of friends sponsored a Syrian refugee family inspired by Nhung's own experience.

Note: *This feature was adapted from an interview conducted with Dr. Nhung Tran-Davies.*

ZYP ART GALLERY:

Since Zyp Art Gallery's inception in 2018, the gallery has held 13 exhibitions with artworks from local artists, community groups, and school children. Zyp Art Gallery even has on display an original Alex Janvier- Alberta Indigenous artist whose masterpieces includes Rogers Place's floor mural [Tsa Tsa Ke K'e \(Iron Foot Place\)](#) and the [Morning Star - Gambah Then'](#) which adorns the dome within the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau.

AWARDS:

Hank and Tillie Zyp's many accolades include: The Alberta Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution to Humanity (1987), the Celebration 20/20 Award for NGO International Development (1998), Stars of the Millennium Volunteer Award from the Wild Rose Foundation (2004), the Sage Award for Social Justice and Peace (2011) and the RISE Lifetime Achievement Award (2012).

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