

>> Hello and welcome to The Valley Today. I am your host Janet Michael. It is Laurel Ridge Community College day, so I am back on the screen with Guy Curtis, he's Director of Marketing for Laurel Ridge Community College. He's got a newbie on the screen for us to chat with today. A newbie to the area, a newbie to the college, and a brand spanking newbie to the show today. I'm pretty excited though, because I think Monica might end up being a recurring guest in some shape or form. Monica James is joining us. She is a professor of art and program lead at Laurel Ridge Community College. Monica, I want to jump in and chat with you first. Usually Guy and I go back and forth for a little bit. We did that before we started recording just a tad. Because I know you've got a ton of things that are happening at Laurel Ridge. You've got an author that's coming in that's also an artist, Artscape is going to be hanging at Laurel Ridge, I understand you're going to give me details for that. But first, let's talk about the art program, because I got to tell you, I didn't really know there was an arts program at Laurel Ridge Community College, so educate me.

>> Thank you for saying that, Jane, and thank you so much for having me on. I'm so excited to be her. We have a fantastic program with beautiful studio, but it is a hidden gem. So my goal is to shine some light on that and share that with the community. I think COVID put all, we're still like post COVID, we're still crawling out of our hermit caves and coming back to life here. I'm really excited to come on board because I am able to step into this beautifully, vibrant program that has been here for at least 30 years. It's been here since the inception of the college. We've always had art at Laurel Ridge. My predecessors have done a wonderful job of really creating a really good foundation program in the arts that gives students a wonderful starting point. It's like a launch pad to start your career in the arts. We've got all the foundation classes that you need drawing, 2D design, 3D design, art history, everything that you need to really start your associate degree and build a portfolio, which students need to go on to finish their Bachelors. Whether it's architecture, photography or design, this is a great place to start.

>> Let's talk about that for a second, because you make a really good point in that sometimes when people hear art program, they think, you have to be a painter, and that is not the only form of art. You can use this art degree to become an architect, to become a photographer, fine arts. There are other careers that you can get into that having this foundation of this associates in art is a really good thing.

>> It is, thank you for bringing that up. Even in art history, a lot of my students that fall in love with art history, but what do I do with this. This is what about curating. You could teach, you could live that night at the museum every day and curate and hang shows, and there's so many different aspects just to running museums that students may not realize. I think there's also a myth of a starving artist and a lot of people are maybe steered away from that career or maybe don't have a lot of time to explore the arts and it's an unknown, but there are so many amazing careers in the arts. If you think about

it, big companies like Coca Cola, they spend 30% on the arts. If they want to stay viable and stay current. That's a big chunk of the budget. In this whole new digital world that we're creating in our pocket robots, which I like to call my cell phone my pocket robot and waiting for it to transform on me. Not that it matter, digital world is all created by artists. Artists are working now to create these digital spaces that we'll be exploring, the meta becomes our new norm. But we need art for all of that world. The apps and things that we were talking about, all of that is this user experience design. That wasn't even a degree when I was a student.

>> I want to get on my soap box for a second when you talk about starving artists and just say that phrase happens because those of us that can't do and want to buy do not appreciate or understand the amount of time and effort and talent that goes into creating a piece of art, therefore, we always think it should be cheaper than what it is. We're not paying for the art supplies that it took you to create that piece, we're paying for the years of education that you have gotten at Laurel Ridge at a university to be able to learn and be creative enough to create the piece that I want to purchase from you, so that starving artist is on the purchasers, not on the artists themselves.

>> You're right, that value is defined in many different ways by the consumer, by our culture, how do we value these things? We are really lucky in this community, because even as a newbie stepping in, I can see that we value the arts. We have wonderful arts organizations like the Shenandoah Arts Council or Art Libre, which I was talking with today. They're actually hanging some youth art in our gallery. We have a student volunteer hanging art in our art atrium. But we have a lot of these wonderful space. There's some beautiful galleries that are here and local artists that are here. This is a vibrant community for the arts, but it is important to support that. It takes a community, it takes that team to support those spaces and artwork and creativity. It's like watering a plant. We got to give it some water so it can grow and flourish and stay with us to appreciate year after year.

If there is a student out in listener land that maybe is still in high school, maybe has always had some artistic talent and is now in their '20s, '30s, '40s, '50s, '70s, even, is there a program for them to come to Laurel Ridge and start from ground zero? What does that look like?

>> It starts at our welcome desk, which is wonderful. You don't even need to really land on our website or call first, come onto our campus. It's beautiful and we have a wonderful welcome desk where people will greet you and show you the different programs that we have and work on enrollment. For folks out there interested in art, we have wonderful, beautiful studios that are here. You can come to us for an Associate degree in Arts and then transfer, you could go on to architecture or design or other places to finish your Bachelor's degree, or even finish with us, and then just explore and build your portfolio. I would really invite any student out there that's interested also to contact me. I'm going to

put myself out there because I love advising for the arts.

>> This is why you are the friendly neighborhood art teacher.

>> Yes, I am. Honestly, my mission is to help students make their dreams a reality. Like Disney or Jiminy Cricket, if you believe, we can help you make your dreams a reality and really take that creativity and find a pathway for making that your every day, making that your future career, navigating that. I'm pretty good at that. As a student, nobody helped me navigate. They were like, I don't know, figure it out. In an art, it's almost like a bad word to talk about career. We're going to mess up the aesthetics here by talking about money, but you need money to buy paint, and brushes aren't free.

>> This is one of those types of programs that is so very different from the ones that we normally talk about. Because normally we're talking about getting a particular degree, learning a particular skill in order to stack a credential and become a welder, or get your degree and become a teacher or a nurse, or things along those lines. This art program allows you to really explore all of your options and then figure out your pathway as you go. That's really cool from a community college perspective.

>> Our faculty are so wonderful, and I think that students get that kind of support to really find out who you are as an artist, what's your style and what's your niche, and to really launch that career, you need mentorship. Besides me, we've got some other wonderful faculty who are here. Even for students who maybe don't want a degree but you do want to explore, we've got some cool classes, like actually this summer, we've got a watercolor class with Clay Walthall, and he's going to be using the beautiful landscapes over at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. They'll be drawing there, and then coming back to our studio to create watercolors. It's like a two week intensive watercolor class with Clay Walthall.

>> That sounds cool. Guy Curtis, you want to take a watercolor class with me?

>> Actually, I was going to say I have a little of art background and to support Monica's thoughts when we were talking yesterday about her program areas, how art can be a foundation for your future and your career. I admit I did take actually an art class with Laurel Ridge back in the day between my semesters during undergrad, but also in high school, I took three years of art to help just to explore understanding art. I was sharing with her too, that my family in particular, my mom and my grandmother and aunts and uncles were big into oil painting as well as watercolor, and so I've always had a little bit of art in me, but I do credit the art history and the background that I've had, and thinking about the foundation that you can grab from Laurel Ridge, how marketing has benefited, at least my own personal career in marketing, has been contributed probably to the art fundamentals that I learned back in the day. Just simple composition and balance, when you're framing up the next

course catalog or the viewbook that we offer, there's an artistic approach to balancing your layout in your design. A lot of the things she's mentioned today and future growth of where fundamentally you need to where art is and how to balance all the things when it comes to producing your final product, especially marketing, having all that background and knowledge and experience, now moving into a new digital age, this is very exciting. If you are in the position of exploring, or perhaps if you are looking to take a few credits like a watercolor class and things like that, Laurel Ridge is a great place to start.

>> Is there a particular website that people can go to?

>> Yes, certainly. If you're looking into an associate's degree, great place to start is laurelridge.edu/arts. There are some big plans coming in the future for some of the programs, but there's a few options if you're considering getting your associates and moving on. Our class schedule is going to be live very soon at the end of the month, and so you can also pick up individual courses. If you're a current student or if you're a community member looking to get a few credits or want to take a few classes through some of Monica's programs, it's a great place to start with us.

>> You could sign up there for that watercolor class.

>> That's right.

>> Let's take a break. Monica, when we come back, can we talk a little bit about arts scape going on the walls at Laurel Ridge? You've got the event that's coming up that's going to be really cool. Can you give me all the details for some of the cool, fun things?

>> I sure can. Yes, please.

>> We are on the screen for Laurel Ridge Community College Day. Joining us is Guy Curtis, he is their Director of Marketing. Monica James is on the Zoom with us as well. She is Professor of Art and a program lead. We're going to talk more with her when we come back in just a couple of minutes.

>> Hi, I'm Chico a senior at Mountain Vista Governor School. Together with environmental nonprofit sustainability matters, we're rebranding recycling. Unfortunately, not all plastics are recyclable. Some localities only take plastic bottles, others take all number 1 and number 2 plastics. Almost no one takes number 4 through 7. Plastic bags can't go in with irregular plastic.