



JCAC Reports Unfortunate Incident With Panther Mascot Stolen

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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JERSEYVILLE - The Jersey County Arts Council (JCAC) reports an unfortunate incident related to a JCAC community project in November. A scarecrow was vandalized and Jersey Community High School (JCHS) property has been stolen.

Sherry Droste of JCAC said she doesn't want to be a downer, but she feels compelled to share this unfortunate incident related to a community project.

"We have had a great time, during the past year, helping to rally folks to participate in creative public art displays (yarn bombing, Cow Parade, Art to Go sacks, scarecrows, Halloween window painting, granny square Christmas tree)," Droste said. "People have joined in, worked together, and had a lot of fun.

"We have also been blessed to have the support of the city, JCHS staff, individuals who have donated materials and money, and some dedicated volunteers who have been behind the scenes making all these things happen. This is exactly the mission of the Arts Council, and we are incredibly proud to have accomplished so much in less than two years. It would not have been possible without a tremendous amount of teamwork."

"This brings me to the principle with which I have been struggling. Sometime between Thursday, November 2, 2023, and Saturday morning, November 4, 2023, someone vandalized - and stole from - the Panther football scarecrow that was placed along State Street, near Josh Evans' Law Office. The scarecrow ended up twisted halfway around the pole."

She continued and said, "These are the things that disappoint me, and they are definitely not okay:

1) "We have a fabulous partnership with the Life Basics Team at JCHS. They coordinate our entire grocery sack project with Sinclair's.....and do a great job. This scarecrow was their personal project.

2) "JCHS football coach, Caleb Williams, loaned them a helmet but needed to have it returned, as it is Jersey 100 property. It was stolen sometime during the indicated time period. Some of the added decoration on the scarecrow was also removed.

3) "The scarecrow was placed, in plain view, along State Street in Jerseyville which, technically, is state property.

4) "My husband and I placed all of the scarecrows. We talked about this one being more vulnerable because of the helmet. We hoped no one would disturb it, but my husband ended up using about 20 zip ties to secure it to the frame and the pole, in hopes it would be less attractive to take. I realize zip ties are not too hard to cut, but the sheer number of them ensured some extra work to remove the helmet."

Droste explained that the Arts Council has debated about what to do about the situation.

"We have never had a problem with vandalism, destruction, nor stolen property in a full year.....including the week the cows were placed at the fairgrounds," Droste said. "I brag to people about how proud I am of that fact. It speaks volumes about the people of our community. This kind of senseless act really disappoints me, especially because I doubt seriously that there was any malicious intention. I suspect it was simply a prank or a dare.....a chance to claim the helmet as a 'trophy.' It's still not okay."

Droste said JCAC has been in touch with the Jerseyville Police Department and the JCHS resource officer to ask for guidance and direction.

She said this is their current plan: "The arts council has decided to set a time limit for the return of the helmet. The helmet may be returned to the outer door at the Jerseyville police station by Monday, December 4, 2023, with no questions asked. It may be done anonymously.

"If the helmet is not returned - in good condition - by the end of the day (midnight) on Monday, the 4th, I will be filing a police report, on behalf of the JCAC. At that point, there is access to cameras, etc.

"We have such a great community and so much of which to be proud. Let's all jump on board; continue to work together and support each other; and continue to model what is the best in each of us. There is a wealth of great potential here, and I don't want to see it be compromised because of a few folks choosing to be less than their best. As for the Jersey County Arts Council, there are plenty more creative ideas in the works, and we plan to forge ahead. Many thanks to this community for your continued support."