

Soozie is a creative artist, and loves making three-dimensional objects from recycled and repurposed materials. Not too long ago, she decided to make a life-size pterodactyl using plastic bottles, pool noodles, bamboo poles, and empty beverage cans. It was too large to work on in the house, so she made it in modular pieces and assembled it outdoors by hanging it on a cable over our driveway.

The dinosaur suspended above the driveway received great interest from all of the delivery drivers that had a package for us. Once she saw one of them sitting in his van in our drive after his delivery; he told Soozie he was “snapchatting” with friends about the prop. This was just one example of the responses that she received.

She kept asking me what we were going to do with her creation. I kept emphasizing that she was being an artist and making things for the joy of creating it. She was nearly finished when her friend Austin from the Hands On Science Center (HOSC) called, saying that they were building a new feature called “Dino Tots”. He began to describe an area inside the HOSC that would be like a playground with dinosaurs all around. Soozie then said, “How would you like to have a life-sized pterodactyl?” Austin was very pleased with the idea, and the dinosaur is now hanging in the museum.

Soozie also painted a Jurassic-themed mural (with an active volcano) on a large canvas that is hung as a background, and helped Austin to create the faux stone features to represent the landscape. Then she created several baby dinosaurs hatching from eggs that were placed along the path that the kids would take on their way to a fun slide imbedded in the structure.

She had begun her association with the HOSC by refurbishing their representation of a T-Rex that had been made for them by another art teacher several years before and had remained outdoors under an awning. She had to repair it, strengthen it, add non-dangerous teeth, change the eyes, and give it a new paint job. It was well accepted and appreciated by the museum staff.

Since the work on the pterodactyl, Soozie has worked on several other projects for the HOSC. The biggest was a huge mural on the outside of the building illustrating a DNA trail that had art and music elements in place of the amino acids in the double helix. The mural also included a very large portrait of Einstein on the outer wall. She also painted a backdrop representing a storm for an exhibit inside the building. Another creative event was for a shark-based trunk-or-treat activity at the museum that the kids really loved.

She began preparation of a large “friendly” dragon to hang outside at home, but now her main goal is to create a very large, essentially life-size replica of an octopus hanging on a chandelier. This is also slated to be placed inside the HOSC. Her original octopus design was finished and used for a beach-themed Vacation Bible School at a local church.

She must be busy creating to fully feel the joy of life. She will continue to make ocean creatures from repurposed materials. She doesn’t have to worry any more about waiting for the call.