

'Courage' revealed

Spring Unveiling kick-off event
a tribute to cancer victims

This Friday, the Spring Unveiling Art Festival begins with the much-anticipated firsthand look at a recently completed sculptural tribute to those who have, who are and who will battle cancer.

The sculpture, "Courage," is the result of a dream local artist Michael Tieman had almost a year ago. Following the tragic death of his sister, Connie, to breast cancer, Tieman began to conceptualize creating a figure in honor of her, and everyone touched by the disease. The figure would encapsulate the inner strength and courage those battling cancer exhibit, and would be a tribute to the fight itself.

"There is a look of courage in their eyes I cannot describe with words, it's not entirely defiant (Cancer will not win) but also shows a grace and a quiet determination. That is the courage I need to capture," Tieman wrote of his vision.

The creative journey, bringing "Courage" from the recesses of Tieman's mind to a bronze sculpture, now available in 18 inch, 36 inch and a "heroic" nine-foot size, was a collaborative one. Tieman started out somewhat hesitantly, unsure of how to fully capture his vision, but then found direction in the chord the piece seemed to strike with everyone it encountered.

At last year's Stormy Weather Arts Festival, Tieman observed as the unfinished piece brought some to tears and compelled others to reveal highly personal stories. Almost all who came near it were drawn to simply touch it, fondling its bald head almost instinctively.

"I was asking all these questions... Is it right? Are the eyes right? The face? And I heard that the eyes were perfect. People saw their mother, their brother. She became everybody," Tieman said. "I didn't touch the face after Stormy Weather. It is where she gained her identity."

The concept of the piece resembling a warrior — the commander of the battle even — was further emphasized as the result of an emotional conversation Tieman had with a friend and his wife, who is a breast cancer survivor.

"He then brought up the fact that the warrior stance is feet apart and firmly planted but on the balls of their feet and the knees slightly bent. That way they can stand solid and unwavering for a long time," Tieman writes in his book, "The



"Courage"

Building of 'Courage,' which chronicles his creative process.

"'Courage' has transcended to a higher place and purpose, she is definitely no longer mine but she is for all."

Today "Courage" stands tall, cast in bronze, a haunting, determined look in her eyes, cloth wrapped around her taut body like a shield. Finished in mid-January, the first of the 36-inch "family edition" sculptures was purchased by

Tieman's brother-in-law in memory of Connie and will be donated to the Summa Foundation Cancer Center in Ohio, where she spent six years battling cancer. The hope is that those entering the cancer center and walking past "Courage," will find "renewed strength and hope" through her presence.

"It is perfect, in my opinion," local resident Kathy Gardner, a breast cancer survivor, said after seeing "Courage." "It touched on all of the elements of going through cancer. It is one of those pieces that I think really will speak very strongly to people."

"As a survivor myself, when I saw it, it really struck a chord with me. In my opinion it is a perfect depiction of strength and beauty. She is bald, a reality of cancer, yet she is still beautiful. It just touched my heart."

Tieman's sister, Beverly Starr, said she loves that what viewers see in "Courage" means something different to each person who comes in contact with it.

"I think it's very touching and impressive. It's very moving and it means a lot to me too because of our sister and I lost a very dear friend just a few months after. It's a very moving tribute and if it can bring comfort, hope or peace to anybody that would be great," she said.

"I love the fact that she is so strong and muscular, not weak and sad looking. Because a lot of people survive, a lot of people survive for many, many years. And people have to know that when they are going through all that turmoil. There is hope at the end of the tunnel."

Tieman and his wife, Nancy, will travel to the Ohio cancer center in July to present a check for \$5,000, included with the sculpture donation, to cancer support services. It has been his goal all along, Tieman said, to give up to half the sale price of each piece sold for the day-to-day support needed by those in the midst of battle.

His coffee-table book, "The Building of 'Courage,'" will accompany purchases of the sculpture and will also be available for those who simply want a way to further connect to it. The book details the philosophy behind the sculpture, revealing some of the symbolism and behind-the-scenes stories. It follows the journey from dream, to the foundry, to completion and will retail for \$85.

The "Courage" unveiling is scheduled for 4 p.m. May 1 at the Cannon Beach Chamber Information Center, Second and Spruce streets.