

Des Moines Register

ARTS IN IOWA

What's an 8-foot pile of pillows doing in downtown Des Moines?

Sierra A. Porter Des Moines Register

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An eight-foot-tall, cubical pile of pillows is showing up at locations around downtown Des Moines, part of an effort to raise awareness of youth homelessness in Iowa.

The work of Ames artist Kub Stevens, the "Dream Cube" stood outside the Wellmark YMCA on Thursday. From 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday, it will be at DART Central Station, 620 Cherry St., on Friday, and at Cowles Commons, 221 Walnut St..

The Polk County Youth Action Council assisted with the installation, and comic artist Taylor Carlson, Bravo Greater Des Moines, the Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, Group Creative Services and the Iowa Homeless Youth Centers also helped.

Stevens said the installation symbolizes the needs of homeless young people.

"I want people to take away that to live healthy, fulfilled lives, people need comfort, then people need safety, so then people can dream," said Stevens.

This is the Iowa State University student's first time creating an installation piece, even though he's been making music and writing poetry for years.

A friend recommended in July that he propose the project through public art and design consultancy Group Creative Services.

"My friend got me in contact with them, and from there, it was all pretty quick," said Stevens.

Majoring at ISU in community and regional planning, Stevens told the Des Moines Register that although he isn't affected by the harsh reality of homelessness, he has loved ones who have experienced being down and out.

"Even if I'm not directly affecting someone else's situation, to improve people, in general, has always been close to my heart," Stevens said.

"A social function to art, not just to have art to make it, but actually can speak something to communicate something beneficial, is along the lines of what I've been looking for," he added.

The fight to end homelessness in Des Moines hit a tipping point in 2019 when the city received an almost \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to address youth poverty.

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