

Marshall Fire survivors create mosaics with pieces recovered from the ashes

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Claudia Heaphy helps Cynthia Wallace create a mosaic with coins from Wallace's father's collection. Those who lost their homes to the Marshall Fire were invited to create art projects with pieces they recovered at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Louisville on Saturday. (Mitchell Byars — Staff Writer)

Cynthia Wallace didn't have much time to gather belongings before she had to flee her home Dec. 30 as the flames from the Marshall Fire crept into her neighborhood.

One of the things Wallace had to leave behind was her father's coin collection.

"You know how they tell you to make a list of things to grab? That would have been on the list," Wallace said.

Going over what remains of the collection on Saturday, Wallace spread out the coins; some of them relatively untouched, others melted together in gnarly clumps.

"I think a lot of people are dealing with this," Wallace said. "This has memories, but it's really ugly. So what do I with that?"

This weekend, those who lost their homes in the Marshall Fire were invited to bring bits and pieces they recovered from the ashes to create mosaics, a way to remind them both of what they lost and what they survived.

Colorado Mosaic Artists hosted the event at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Louisville, and provided materials and guidance.

Kathy Thaden with Colorado Mosaic Artists said she got a few emails from people about the idea, including one from Steph Lord, the pastor at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church.

“I had the ability to bring my tribe in and say, ‘I think we have a project,’” Thaden said.



Lord said 13 members of their congregation lost homes in the Marshall Fire, including her own.

“We’ve been trying to find a way to partner with the community to provide support,” Lord said.

On Saturday, families laid out pieces they recovered from the burn sites. There were cracked plates, melted pieces of metal and bits of jewelry.

Lord and her husband, Bill McHardy, along with their kids, Jonah and Cora, brought in a piece of a wind chime, pieces of china and what was left of a license plate.

“The fire must have burned pretty hot at our house,” McHardy said. “We didn’t find much, to be honest. It was slim pickings.”

But they also brought in a few pieces that weren’t damaged in the fire, like their house key, to tie the pieces together.

“It’s a tangible reminder of the life we left behind,” McHardy said. “Hopefully one day we can look at these on the wall and remember.”



Wallace set to work creating a tree from the coin collection for a larger piece, an apt symbol of what has grown from the ashes for the survivors. “My dad spent a lot of time on this,” Wallace said of the collection. “At least this way, it can be art.”

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