

Art with heart Community banner project to brighten downtown Rock Hill

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Oakdale Elementary fifth-graders Sarah Craig, left, and Makaila Manning, both 11, paint banners at the Center for the Arts on Monday. The banners are to be hung from lamp posts along downtown's Main Street and will be displayed on four cubes to be placed in the community. Below, Oakdale Elementary students Anna Lucas, from left, Stacie Rockholt and Andy Nguyen, all 10, paint banners.

A splash of color will liven up the winter blahs in downtown Rock Hill, part of a community arts program sponsored by the Arts Council of York County and the Rock Hill school district.

Last month, the arts council asked local residents to submit banner designs that reflect what they love about York County and include a heart shape somewhere in the design.

This week at the downtown Center for the Arts, groups and community members of all ages are adding color to 70 chosen banner designs with acrylic and latex paints. Winning designs included hands holding a heart and tiny hearts showering people in the community.

The banners are to be hung from lamp posts along downtown's Main Street and will be displayed on four cubes to be placed in the community. The site for the cubes has not been determined.

The public arts project was brought to Rock Hill by the school district and arts center as a way to get children and community members involved in public art, said Kristin Sessions, resource development coordinator for the center.

Harriet Jaworowski, associate superintendent for instruction and accountability with Rock Hill schools, said the project was a natural fit for York County because there is strong support for the arts and a strong fine arts program in the school district.

"Our community cares about art and we have a lot of talented people," she said.

The community art project, titled Creativity: The Heart of the Community, is led by artists in residence Steven Dahlberg and JoAnn Moran, both from Connecticut.

The project is a way for people to express themselves and participate in creating their own community through art, Dahlberg said.

"It is a way to engage people in creating their community and bring people together that wouldn't normally work together, like youth and adults." Dahlberg said.

The banners for this project are re-used. New designs have been placed on the backs of old banners that otherwise would have been thrown away. Moran works with companies and cities around the country to collect old banners.

The project is also a way to promote environmental activism, Moran said.

Old banners can't be recycled into new materials because of the thread woven into the vinyl.

"I'm talking about a 15-foot by 48-foot banner that comes off a billboard. That's a lot of waste," Moran said. "We want to re-use them, instead of making more garbage."

Sessions said 10 banner designs came from individuals in the community and the rest were submitted by students from the Rock Hill school district.

Ashley Beard, an art teacher at South Pointe High School, brought her Art III class to participate in the painting.

"This is a great project for us. It's our first project of the new semester," she said.

Corinna Altenpohl, 16, a South Pointe junior who is an international exchange student from Germany, sat on the floor and smeared bright yellow paint with her hand onto a large banner. She said using her hand was faster and more fun.

Atenpohl said when she graduates, she wants to design sets for theater groups.

Nasheka Hart, a South Pointe junior, daintily brushed black paint around the edges of a red heart. She said for part of this project, her Art III class also submitted designs for the banners.

Dahlberg said the project is collaborative, so everyone can add something.

The banners and cubes are at the arts center through Saturday and may be painted by anyone. The finished banners and cubes will be displayed Feb. 21 through March 31. An opening reception will be at the arts center March 20.