

Oaktown Teen Times

Mural Students Take Art to Oakland's Streets

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So how do you rejuvenate a community? You can do it, one street at a time. The Community Rejuvenation Project took place during a six-week period in July and August,

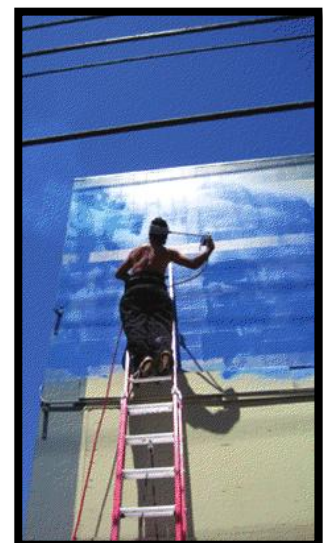


and included 30 students from more than a dozen Oakland high schools. We learned how to prepare walls (a process called buffing), design murals and spray paint and complete them. We developed and explored who we are and how art can change our world.

We dove into training and challenged ourselves to learn something completely new. Some of us had experience in painting, surveying, clean up or promotion, but besides the lead artists, we were teaching each other. We all knew which job we wanted, but to stay consistent and equal we rotated out of our comfort zones, sometimes taking on work we didn't know how to do. We were determined to finish and overcame obstacles of learning to collaborate.

Ending our first official mural, at 46th Avenue and Foothill Boulevard, demanded patience, commitment and teamwork. We learned to complete and to be committed to each job. The first block party was another good moment, though we were disappointed after a delay with our paychecks. With or without our pay, however, we made our time and friendships count.

After our murals were finished, we worked for a sixth week to design and lay out a 24-page magazine with our photos and stories. It was a tribute to our work, something tangible besides the walls we created. Not only that, it also



commemorates and acknowledges the issues that are real and present in our neighborhoods, ones that most officials refuse to bring to light.

Rejuvenating our communities requires all of our efforts. Since our government leaders are failing, we are doing our jobs as citizens to shine the light on what needs to be done. As our walls show, we are not only artists and workers, but activists protesting for equality and peace in our neighborhoods. Our name —Street Warriors Enacting Artistic Revolution, or S.W.E.A.R. — explains our mission and our hopes. — Isabelle Aspera, Oakland High (class of 2008) and S.W.E.A.R. magazine editor.



FIVE WEEKS, FIVE STREETS CRP artists

Painted murals at the intersections of 46th Avenue and Foothill Boulevard; 83rd Street and MacArthur Boulevard; 23rd Avenue and E.12th Street;

23rd Avenue & E.16th Street, and Fairfax Avenue and Foothill boulevards. Top: the mural at 46th and Foothill tells a creation story of Mother Earth and Father Sky. Middle right: teacher and professional muralist Elijah Pfothenauer takes the lead on some sky-high spraypainting. Bottom left: Florence Wilson of Skyline High peeks through a completed doorway. Right: Isabelle Aspera gets some perspective from atop a ladder at one of the mural sites.

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