

THE BEE

New Brooklyn mural salutes inspirational leaders

BY RITA A. LEONARD

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A 60' x 16' outdoor mural focused on leaders in social justice has been painted at 3111 S.E. 13th Avenue in Brooklyn.

Central to the mural is a large Portland Rose, the petals of which feature the faces of five leaders: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, Chief Joseph, Cesar Chavez, and Mahatma Gandhi. Other images of freedom are also included in the mural.

Designed by artist Hector Hernandez, Director of Art & Culture Services, the mural is a project of the Oregon Leadership Institute at Portland State University. The project highlights a volunteer high school mentoring program primarily focused on Latino youth. The program is funded by the Portland Children's Investment Fund, which also funds a variety of after school youth programs.

Students from four Portland high schools and four middle schools participated in rendering the painting.

Project Coordinators Eddie Moreno and Simone Rede supervised the student crews. "Neighbors and local businesses were very supportive," says Moreno. "The Blue Dragonfly at 1195 S.E. Powell Boulevard donated space for our June 28th celebration. We invited students, families, community partners, and support staff from each participating school to the dinner event. The Brooklyn Action Corps also supported our project, and paint was provided by the Regional Arts and Culture Council."

The mural is painted on the east side of the building that houses Hernandez' studio. "On days when it was too hot to paint, we toured other murals in the city to study their styles and workmanship," says Rede. "The students learned all aspects of muralism, ranging from community building to beautification. The OLI also awards high school volunteers with one school credit after completing 130 hours of community service."

Hernandez initiated the mural project last fall when he met to plan with the RACC. Dr. Jose Padin, Director of OLI and Sociology Professor at PSU, felt it would be an ideal project to help promote student self-esteem and community service, while providing the beauty of public art in public spaces.

Anna Mendoza, a Madison High School student who has participated in the leadership program for four years, was recognized for her contributions at the June event.

Public art that focuses on community values strikes many as a great addition to our city. This project extends the concept by including student participants in a mentoring project that benefits participants, as well as art aficionados.



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This 60' x 16' mural in Brooklyn, part of a student-mentoring program, features five leaders in social justice