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Dog park mural 'fun and whimsical'

By Lisa Wakeland

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Susan Romer and Don Triel Nuckols paint part of the former lock-testing chamber at Kellogg Park's Dog Field. They're part of a team of students from ArtWorks creating a mural for the Anderson Township Park District.

A drab, old lock-testing chamber in Kellogg Park near the Ohio River is getting a colorful, new makeover.

The concrete structure sits in the middle of the park's dog field, 6701 Kellogg Ave., and a team of artists and students from ArtWorks is painting a mural on the northeastern side.

ArtWorks is a local organization that connects student apprentices with professional artists to create public art around the Greater Cincinnati area.

There are about 20 dogs featured on the wall – all depictions of the real pets of dog field members and donors – along with a famous quote from Plato, "Life must be lived as play."

"We wanted it to be fun and whimsical, and we wanted to show the playfulness of dogs," said Susan Romer, one of the student artists working on the mural. "It represents the dogs' personalities and we tried to show each dog as they really are."

Anderson Township resident Claudia Cline, who regularly visits the dog field with her beagle-mix, Pflash, came up with this idea for a public art project as a way to thank the Anderson Township Park District for its recent renovations.

Cline also wanted to add a creative element to the dog field and said she's thrilled with the design.

"I absolutely love it, ... and it represents the dogs beautifully" Cline said.

"Not only does the park benefit, but the kids get jobs as artists. The whole area looks totally improved and like somewhere you'd want to hang out."

The student apprentices are working with lead artist Elizabeth Hatchett and assistant teaching artist Laura McNeel to transform the former lock-testing facility.

Romer said it was a challenge to keep everything to scale on such a large canvas, but they created 4-foot grids and drew everything by hand before adding paint.

Hatchett worked on the concept for about a month before meeting the team of student artists, and said she was excited to work with ArtWorks again.

"It's really inspiring ... to be working with these young people who are naturally curious," she said. "To work on something that changes the environment for the public is really rewarding."

The mural should be finished by November, and Cline said they still need to raise about \$2,500. So far, close to \$32,000 was raised through private donations from the owners of the dogs on the wall or those who support ArtWorks and public art, she said.

The dog field is a members-only area, but the mural can be seen from other areas of the park, 6701 Kellogg Ave., and the Park District will clear some trees to improve visibility for the public.

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Community Experts



Eric Spangler (Editor) - (513) 576-8251 espanqler@communitypress.com



Lisa Wakeland (Reporter) - (513) 248-7139 lwakeland@communitypress.com



Melanie Laughman (Sports Editor) - (513) 248-7573 melaughman@communitypress.com



Nick Dudukovich (Sports Reporter) - (513) 248-7570 ndudukovich@communitypress.com

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