

rural in east-end wall painting

The Star Sept 2/08

■ Laura Cummings

Residents heading east on Highway 174 in recent days may have already noticed a new addition to the scenery – a herd of life-sized cows.

The illustrated farm animals are part of a new mural initiative, placed on a sound barrier at 1071 Cholette Cres. to cover a vandalised previous attempt at beautifying the area.

Helmed by Mural Arts – a group originally formed in Philadelphia more than 25 years ago that “works with the community to paint over graffiti in the city,” explains program manager Craig Schoen – this is the first initiative for the newly-minted Ottawa chapter. The local organization was formed in partnership between Schoen, a University of Ottawa fourth-year business student, and Bruce Firestone, founder of the Ottawa Senators, after they met at the post-secondary institute where Firestone is an entrepreneur-in-residence.

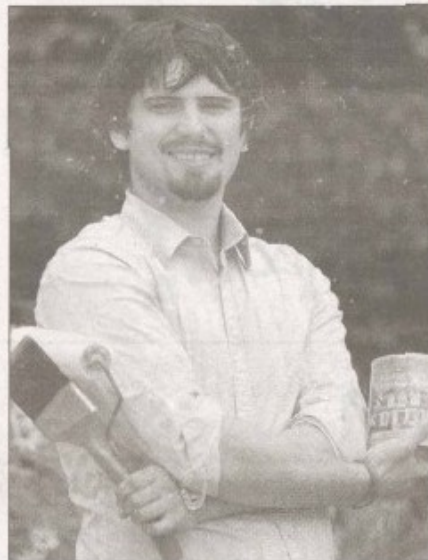
Painting – which began earlier this month – was completed with the help of Canterbury High School students, who designed the mural’s main concept, SKETCH Orléans and CAVE (Communities Advancing Valued Environments), Schoen explains, while financial support for the project came from fundraising and sponsorship.

Approximately \$1,000 was raised towards the completion of the east-end mural, he continues, including \$600 by sell-



Above: Mural Arts construction manager Robin Mounstevan hammers away while Orléans Coun. Bob Monette, right, and Bruce Firestone look on. Left: Mural Arts program manager Craig Schoen.

PHOTOS BY DARREN BROWN



ing Group of Seven prints from Firestone’s collection and several hundred from sponsors. Paint was also given to the project for free, Schoen adds. A large portion of empty space still remains, he explains, which will hopefully be filled by sponsorships from area businesses.

Last August, the same location was repainted by youth from the Students In Motion organization, representatives from Orléans Coun. Monette’s office and other volunteers. The mural, meant to cover graffiti vandalism after Colour Your World decorated the structure several years prior, depicted well-known locales from around the Orléans community, including Petrie Island, Place d’Orléans and different area

community centres.

Last week’s placement of the new 320-sq.-ft mural – featuring a pastoral scene of cows and rolling fields and a tribute Orléans’ upcoming 150th anniversary with a more urban graffiti edge – on Monday, Aug. 25 “went really well,” recounts Schoen.

Initial work took “five days of straight painting” to create the mural’s rural concept on a set of panels, he explains, with the graffiti section completed this past weekend. “(The artists) did a great job.”

The initiative presented “a great opportunity” to showcase legal graffiti alongside more traditional artwork, says Mike Mesa, one of the artists responsible for the mural’s graffiti component.

“It’s a good mix of rural and urban,” he continues. “It promotes our medium ... and shows graffiti’s not all bad.”

While attempting to combine two decidedly different genres was a bit of a challenge, the

outcome has been “coming together quite nicely,” Mesa adds. “It’s going to be something a little different than people expect.”

Looking towards the next Mural Arts initiative, plans include creating a section on the group’s website – www.muralarts.ca – where residents can offer suggestions for upcoming mural locations, Schoen says, with aims to increase community awareness and create another east-end initiative next year.

Monette also says he’s looking at the future with a positive viewpoint, and hoping the artwork will remain untouched.

“There’s a code of ethics when it comes to these things,” he explains. “I’m hoping with a proper mural, proper art, it won’t be vandalised.”

The mural represents both the past and future of Orléans, Monette continues, with the pastoral scene harkening back to the east-end community’s days as a rural village and the graffiti-infused section showcasing modern features like Petrie Island.

“We wanted something with an identity for Orléans,” he adds. “I love the artists’ concept. It’s a way of making the community look better. It’s a big improvement.”

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