

Art gets a move on

EMILY MATHIEU
STAFF REPORTER

Our streets just got a bit of a cultural boost. Today marks the launch of the Art on the Move project, a small fleet of vehicles swathed in works created by local artists.

"What we are trying to do is replace some of the plethora of advertising we see on the streets with something beautiful," said Louise Garfield, executive director of Arts Etobicoke, who worked in conjunction with Lakeshore Arts to create the project.

Local artists are teamed up with community organizations to create a design that is digitally transferred to vinyl and applied to a vehicle.

Three vehicles are being officially unveiled today. The plan is to have 15 vehicles on the road in three years.

"We wanted to do something that was very accessible to the public and very visual and very fun."

The project was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Arts in the Hood/TO Live with Culture.

Garfield also hopes the project might "inspire the TTC to have an art fleet."

Here is a breakdown of the three new vehicles decorating our streets:

DECOMMISSIONED TTC BUS

FUNCTION: A mobile computer lab for at-risk youth.

ARTISTS: Patrick Thompson, 30, and Jennifer Rudski Bonnet-Plume, 24.

COMMUNITY PARTNER: Belka Enrichment Centre, Toronto.

CREATION: Rudski Bonnet-Plume and Thompson worked with 15 youths, using old *National Geographic* magazines and portraits to create collages.

INSPIRATION: "To bring some kind of greenery or lushness into the harsh environment that is downtown Toronto," said Thompson.

"One young girl has this giant headdress (made) of every kind of tropical birds we could find in *National Geographic*."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON HARRIS / TORONTO STAR

FOODSHARE VAN



FUNCTION: Delivers food to areas in need.

COMMUNITY PARTNER: FoodShare

ARTIST: Beata Kruszynski, 25

CREATION: Kruszynski worked with about 10 youths from the centre to create the design demonstrating the creation and distribution of food.

INSPIRATION: "We were trying to come up with a concept that would unite food from field to table, but make it personal," said Kruszynski. "We are so used to seeing advertisements all the time. Why not see artwork and something that is beneficial to people as well?"

VAN OWNED BY WHITE KNIGHT KITCHENS INC.

FUNCTION: Company use

ARTIST: Amir Akbari, 25

COMMUNITY PARTNER: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

CREATION: A dozen CAMH clients created more than 60 works of art that were incorporated into the final design.

INSPIRATION: "The process was really about the idea of collaboration... about (participants) being true to their own creativity, but being part of something bigger," said Akbari.



With your gift, the Fresh Air Fund can help send 25,000 disadvantaged and special needs children to camp.

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Tax receipts will be issued in September.

Fun comes first with camp's free programs

Kids from different financial backgrounds blend and befriend each other at St. Alban's

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Robbie's family relies on the food bank.

Anita's struggles to keep a roof over her head.

Billy spent his formative years in a women's shelter hiding from his stepfather.

Johnny's mom and dad both work but can't make ends meet.

You'd never know David's parents are affluent.

He's just a regular kid.

Who you are or where you come from is no big deal at St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club.

"It's a great mix of kids who are all integrated — you can't tell who's who," said Anna Sturino, program director at St. Alban's, which is celebrating 60 years of service to the community.

After all, there isn't much time to find out when there's a whole heap of fun waiting to be had and only a limited number of hours in the day to take it all in.

The summer day camp, one of 106 to receive support from the non-profit Fresh Air Fund, has been a staple at the Palmerston Ave. club for three decades, offering neighbourhood kids and those whose parents work downtown a smorgasbord of activities from swimming and rock-climbing to sound studio recording, drama and dance.

Over the past few years, the club and camp have expanded horizons and stretched boundaries.

Programs now run in two of the city's 13 priority neighbourhoods, Weston-Mount Dennis and Jane-Finch. Programs there are free.

About 20 per cent of kids at St. Alban's are subsidized, according to Sturino.

In many cases, the camps give 6- to 12-year-olds a reason to get out of bed.

Every day is a new adventure.

Better than being glued to the tube all day.

Many of the counsellors are graduates of the camps and are applying the leadership skills they learned on the basketball court or in the crafts room and are teaching by example.

Senior staff are either educators or youth workers and serve as role models for youngsters.

"Children need tools to handle the struggles they face every day," said Sturino, adding lessons learned at camp help kids develop important life skills while having fun with other children.

"They should just be kids."

If you've been touched by the Fresh Air Fund or have a story to tell, email lferenc@thestar.ca or call 416-869-4309.