



TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

Masters student Ignmar Middlehoff (right) works on a painting while McGall Saltzman (left) looks at another at Rose Cottage.

Masters art projects help spruce up CV

By Carter Smith

Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck, the Tasmanian Devil, and other cartoon figures bloomed with the warmth of fresh colors last Saturday on the walls of Rose Cottage at Children's Village. The lively characters, which decorate the common area and bedrooms on the second floor of the residence hall, received new coats of paint

thanks to approximately 40 juniors from nearby Masters School.

Meanwhile, at another of the residential treatment center's cottages, the rest of the Masters junior class teamed with Children's Village (CV) students, who ranged in age from 5 to 14 years old, to create mosaic cement block pavers, which will decorate a garden at CV.

The Masters students chose the two

art projects as service learning projects — an annual tradition for every upper school class at Masters. Mia de Bethune, who coordinates the arts enrichment program at Children's Village through funding from the Keith Haring Foundation, suggested the mosaic project to the Masters students.

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"I had several bags of broken Blue Willow pottery, which had been collected in Hillside Woods by a Hastings woman familiar with Children's Village," de Bethune remembers. "These pottery shards were from tableware used in the Children's Village cottages probably in the 1950's or 1960's — or even earlier. I was given the shards and designed a mosaic project out of them, which I thought would be nice to incorporate into the new Lanza Activities Center — the recreation center that opened up last year. My idea was to recreate plate shapes to represent all the nurturance that boys have received both literal and metaphorical over the many decades."

In addition to the Blue Willow pottery shards, which were provided by Rhonda Newirth, the Children's Village and Masters students used brown pottery shards that the Masters students collected and donated for the project.

According to de Bethune, one of the main goals of the mosaic and mural projects was to have a collaboration between two different populations of adolescents.

According to Amy Atee, director of community service at Masters, the projects gave the juniors the opportunity to identify genuine needs and meet them, as well as to interact with the Children's Village boys. Another goal was involving the juniors in meaningful service to the community.

Service projects are an important part of student life at both Masters and Children's Village, and the two facilities have had a long relationship. Community service projects at Masters are coordinated through the school's MISH (Masters Interested In Sharing and Helping) program.



Masters student Julia Froide touches up a painting in a bedroom at Rose Cottage.

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According to Atee, "For at least my 25-year history at Masters, we have been working with Children's Village, though it started before I came. We have always worked with the adopt-a-cottage program and over the years the need has changed as Children's Village has students each Thursday who work with the boys doing homework, and more importantly act as friends, role models and mentors. We also have participated in the mentoring program which is a larger commitment and many of our students have received wonderful awards for their dedication."

Children's Village students have been involved with many local organizations, including packing medical supplies for Aya Foundation, distributing food and

clothing to homeless men and women through Midnight Run, and helping to train service dogs through Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities (ECAD), which has a facility at CV.

For de Bethune, the mosaic project's importance extends beyond service. Although her work at Children's Village is as an arts enrichment coordinator, she is also a licensed creative arts therapist, and has supervised over 20 art therapy interns from New York University, The College of New Rochelle, The School of Visual Arts, and other area schools.

"Most of these interns have done individual clinical art therapy work with some of the more fragile boys on campus as well as help me to run the art groups," she says. "That said, I do not consider myself an art educator really but an artist

and a therapist and my art classes/groups take very much the open studio approach."

In the Children's Village art program, "Boys are given free choice about what they would like to do and the interns and I support them in their choices by trying to get all necessary supplies and facilitate the successful completion of their artistic vision. This can take numerous forms from graffiti drawing to large sculptures made out of wood scraps and plaster. Mural making is a common activity often done with the boys in their cottages which promotes community and feelings of pride in self and their residential environment — feelings they often lack because they have difficult feelings about being pulled out of their real homes and neighborhoods. It is my great hope that the Village will eventually be able to fund a real art therapy program, which would continue to employ interns, but would have a permanent art therapist on staff as clinician to support art as a modality, as it so wonderfully provides relief and a voice to those with histories of loss and trauma."

According to de Bethune, now that the students are done working on the mosaic pavers, she and an intern will likely apply polyurethane to protect them against degrading — a task she expects to complete this summer. Once that is done, and once a new garden for the Lanza Center is created, the pavers will find their home.

Looking back on the project, Atee says, "The hope was that in spending time together both Masters and CV boys got the unique opportunity to socialize, create art, and find common ground and understanding. Our service learning framework emphasizes the reciprocal nature of service and our volunteers realize that they are gaining in giving and learning as they interact in these projects. We use the brief sentence, 'Serve to learn, learn to serve' as a guiding principal."