Walls reflect community's focus

Brooks, Mignon

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Going from a boy holding a basketball to a boy holding a diploma on a mural in West Philadelphia encouraged some of the local residents to further their education, Mural Arts Program spokesman Brian Campbell said.
Some neighborhoods, like the one in West Philadelphia that changed from a boy holding a basketball to having him hold a diploma, redesign their murals. But, Campbell said, their reasoning has to be relevant. For instance, he said, the West Philadelphia mural was redesigned because its new design had a positive impact on the members of the community.
When the "Dr. J" mural went up at 1234 Ridge Avenue, the adjacent lot was full of garbage. However, Campbell said, the mural served as a catalyst and the neighborhood kept it clean. Some of the most well known murals are "Common Threads" by Meg Saligman at Broad and Spring Garden streets, "Tribute to Reading" by Josh Sarantitis at 19th and Wood streets, and "It Takes a Village" by Cavin Jones at 27th and York streets.

FULL TEXT

A picture can indeed speak volumes.
Going from a boy holding a basketball to a boy holding a diploma on a mural in West Philadelphia encouraged some of the local residents to further their education, Mural Arts Program spokesman Brian Campbell said.
"They inspire hope throughout the city," Campbell said about the numerous murals across Philadelphia. "They bring art outside of the museums and allow everybody to see them."
Battling the city's graffiti problem in 1984, then-Mayor W. Wilson Goode created the Anti-Graffiti Network. In turn, his successor Ed Rendell included the program in the Department of Recreation and it became the Mural Arts Program.
"We continue to work with adjudicated youth," Campbell said. "But we also have an arts education program."
Over 1,000 students between the ages of eight and 18 participate in a variety of activities at 36 of the organization's sites. In the "Big Picture" program, students learn the history and process of mural painting. At the end of the class they actually create their own miniature design. Additionally, they can take classes entitled Painting a Positive Picture, Job Shadowing, Mural Arts Month and the Youth Art Show.
During the summer, students build at least three art gardens, Campbell said.
Prior to getting the mural up on the wall, Campbell said, the community has a series of meetings on what residents would like to see in their neighborhood. If they can't come to a conclusion, he added, members of the organization, community and artists continue to discuss their ideas.
"We work with the community. The community is involved throughout the entire process," Campbell said. "The murals reflect the culture of those communities."
Some neighborhoods, like the one in West Philadelphia that changed from a boy holding a basketball to having him hold a diploma, redesign their murals. But, Campbell said, their reasoning has to be relevant. For instance, he said, the West Philadelphia mural was redesigned because its new design had a positive impact on the members of the community.
Campbell said the Mural Arts Program was designed to depict the culture of the neighborhoods, form partnerships with the communities, promote education and mentorship opportunities for youth, formulate community engagement

and provide professional opportunities for artists.
"We are responsible for over 2,500 murals over the city of Philadelphia," Campbell said.
When the "Dr. J" mural went up at 1234 Ridge Avenue, the adjacent lot was full of garbage. However, Campbell said, the mural served as a catalyst and the neighborhood kept it clean. Some of the most well known murals are "Common Threads" by Meg Saligman at Broad and Spring Garden streets, "Tribute to Reading" by Josh Sarantitis at 19th and Wood streets, and "It Takes a Village" by Cavin Jones at 27th and York streets.
"We hire the artists," Campbell said. "Some we bring in from out of town. But we mostly hire locally."
The city of Philadelphia, the American Jewish Committee, The William Penn Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, the Knight Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation all contribute to the program.
Photograph (A person sketching out a mural)

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Boycott of paper is backed at rally

Brooks, Mignon

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

On Aug. 20, the Philadelphia Daily News ran a front-page photograph of a white family with a headline that read "Just Like Us." The story was about the NBC television show "American Dreams." Meanwhile, many African-Americans were left wondering who the blonde and blue-eyed figures were like, [A. Bruce Crawley] said.
"The response by most people is that this action is long overdue," Philadelphia Masjid's Imam Shamsud-Din Ali said. "Every day the membership in the Coalition continues to grow; every Sunday, more and more pastors encourage their church members not to buy the paper."
"This can't be good for business," Coalition member Michael Coard said. "The Daily News needs to understand that this is not an issue that will go away, and they need to respond to the community's reasonable request to change the paper's direction and leadership."

FULL TEXT

No Daily News is good news, A. Bruce Crawley said at a rally supporting a boycott of the Philadelphia newspaper Saturday at Tindley Temple United Methodist Church.
"That newspaper has finally crossed the line," Crawley said. "This was the wake-up call."
On Aug. 20, the Philadelphia Daily News ran a front-page photograph of a white family with a headline that read "Just Like Us." The story was about the NBC television show "American Dreams." Meanwhile, many African-Americans were left wondering who the blonde and blue-eyed figures were like, Crawley said.
Two days later, on Aug. 22, the paper ran mug shots of numerous African-American men on the front page. And the headline read "Fugitives Among Us."
As a result, The Coalition for Fair News Coverage was formed to respond to what it said were decades of racially abusive and anti-Philadelphia news coverage.

Local pastors have committed themselves to carrying out the information about the boycott from their pulpits. Among them, the Rev. Luis Cortes, Jr., has also decided to deliver the message to the Hispanic community.

"The response by most people is that this action is long overdue," Philadelphia Masjid's Imam Shamsud-Din Ali said. "Every day the membership in the Coalition continues to grow; every Sunday, more and more pastors encourage their church members not to buy the paper."

Over the years, Daughters of Fine Lineage's Sacaree Rhodes said, the Daily News has presented the African-American community as people who smoke dope, stay on welfare and commit violent acts. On the other hand, white people are represented in a positive manner.

"All Black women are not on drugs and we're not all prostitutes," she said. "As a Black woman, I demand respect."

Even years ago when the Black Panthers were forced to strip in the middle of the street, Rhodes said the photographs on the front cover of the newspaper were absolutely demeaning to Black people. Additionally, the coverage of the MOVE house bombing was also offensive, she said.

"When you demean a Black man, you demean me," she said. "The Daily News is legendary for calling Black men animals."

Instead of supporting a mainstream newspaper like the Philadelphia Daily News, NAACP President Jerry Mondesire said we should support African American newspapers, such as, the Philadelphia Tribune, The New Observer and the Philadelphia Sun.

"This can't be good for business," Coalition member Michael Coard said. "The Daily News needs to understand that this is not an issue that will go away, and they need to respond to the community's reasonable request to change the paper's direction and leadership."

Thus far, neither the Philadelphia Daily News nor its parent Philadelphia Newspapers Inc. has responded with any type of solution. Therefore the Coalition members said they are determined to continue until Daily News Editor Zack Stalberg and Managing Editor Ellen Foley resign.

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DETAILS

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Sources: Williams up for new post

Brooks, Mignon

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

"I'm ready for anything that the CEO thinks I'm capable of performing," [Ed Williams] said. "But as far as I know, I'm still in charge of restructured schools."
"We have to make these schools work right here in the community," Williams said during a previous interview with the Philadelphia Tribune. "If we don't, we've failed our kids."

FULL TEXT

Head of Restructured Schools Ed Williams said he's ready for the upcoming school year. But sources claim the school executive may have a new position when students return to class next month.
Sources claim Williams is being considered for the chief academic officer position.
"I'm ready for anything that the CEO thinks I'm capable of performing," Williams said. "But as far as I know, I'm still in

charge of restructured schools."
School Reform Commission spokeswoman Maureen Garrity said schools CEO Paul Vallas could unveil the members of his educational team as early as Monday or Tuesday.
Acting Chief Academic Officer Cozette Buckney has worked overtime with Vallas to select administrators for the team. Yesterday in a round-table discussion, Vallas said Buckney would work alongside the new members in an attempt to ease their transition.
Williams has worked for the Philadelphia School District for more than 25 years, garnering numerous accolades including the 2001 Marcus Foster Administrative Leadership Award.
He received his bachelor's degree in elementary education from Cheyney State College and his master's degree in education from Antioch Graduate College.
Williams said his focus is on the school children of Philadelphia.
"We have to make these schools work right here in the community," Williams said during a previous interview with the Philadelphia Tribune. "If we don't, we've failed our kids."
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Photograph (Ed Williams)

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What is going on with our schools? As a result of school reform plan, more school district jobs in Philadelphia are being cut.

Brooks, Mignon

ProQuest document link

ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

"They're losing some very good people," [Chaka Fattah] said. "I just hope they (School Reform Commission) know what they're doing."

"We should see specific demonstrations of efficiencies occurring," [Anthony Hardy Williams] said. "It relates with someone doing an analysis on what they need versus what they have."

"This was a situation where people were aware it was coming," Gov. Mark Schweiker spokesman La Torre said. "It had to be done."

FULL TEXT

As a result of the school reform plan, more school district jobs in Philadelphia are being cut.

Cutting jobs are never easy. But, Congressman Chaka Fattah said, every enterprise has to add or reduce employees from time to time.

"They're losing some very good people," Fattah said. "I just hope they (School Reform Commission) know what they're doing."

With the district suffering from financial problems and asking the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for money, Senator Anthony Hardy Williams said, job reductions were necessary. If you're going to reform, he added, there has to be changes.

"We should see specific demonstrations of efficiencies occurring," Williams said. "It relates with someone doing an analysis on what they need versus what they have."

In an attempt to save $21.9 million in annual savings, the SRC got rid of 325 positions. Among them were Communications Director Alexis Moore, a couple nurses and 40 elevator operators. None of the school-based staff - principals, teachers, teaching assistants, literacy interns, school security, bus drivers or custodians - were included in the reduction.

"I received a letter that my services are no longer needed," Moore said.

Those who've received letters have been asked to leave by Friday. And they will be paid for the next four weeks.

"While laying off employees is difficult, taking an introspective look at how we have been operating and making fiscally-responsible changes is part of our commitment to the reform process," School Reform Commission Chairman James Nevels said.

When valuable programs are cut and lucrative contracts are made, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds-Brown said she has to question the priorities of the SRC. But, she added, it's obvious that these reductions were forced upon the district from the state.

Fattah's immediate concern is the elimination of his GEAR-UP program from the district, he said. Especially since the director of the program has also been cut.

"If there's a lack of commitment, we're going to have to look for some other ways to implement our federally funded program," Fattah said.

Meanwhile, Councilman Frank Rizzo said the district couldn't have possibly kept everyone and got themselves out of a bad financial situation. And hopefully these reductions will reduce the problems the district is having.

As much as the governor hates to see anyone lose their job, he feels the SRC had to do what they had to do.

"This was a situation where people were aware it was coming," Gov. Mark Schweiker spokesman La Torre said. "It had to be done."

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Photograph (Group of people protesting the Edison school plan)

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