

Street Paintings Aim to Uplift North Portland Community

The Big Bang of Peace and The Unity Circle will turn intersections into gathering spots

By Helen Silvis
Of *The Skanner News*

Two projects in the Albina Killingsworth neighborhood aim to bring people together to build community through turning intersections into public gathering places.

The Unity Circle, a street painting at the intersection of N. Haight and Emerson Streets, will be getting a fresh coat of paint May 31-June 1 as supporters of all ages get together for a painting and block party.

And just a few streets away, at the intersection of N. Borthwick and N. Killingsworth Court, youth and adults are

which is run through Multnomah County Health Department, is sponsoring a range of projects this summer that will bring adults and youth together with the aim of building a stronger, safer community.

The Killingsworth Court intersection was chosen because of its location, bordered by Rosemary Anderson High School and Piedmont Church of Christ, with Jefferson High School, just a block away. Church leaders have welcomed the project and are helping coordinate about 20 students and neighborhood residents, as they turn an intersection that has seen too much conflict into a place for gathering and friendship.

Youth involved in the project envisioned



The North Killingsworth Court street painting group took drawings into the intersection to get a better idea of what it will look like full size.

Neighbors of all ages are invited to take part. To find out when the group will meet next, contact STRYVE at 503-927-1823, or see Big Bang of Peace on Facebook.

working together to create a street painting called The Big Bang of Peace.

The Big Bang of Peace was started with the support of STRYVE, a federal violence prevention initiative. STRYVE (Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere),

a design that features a tree whose roots extend into neighboring streets. The design also includes a honeybee theme because honey is known to increase immunity.

Next, artist Antwoine Thomas, who painted the mural in Rosewood/Rockwood at the intersection of 162nd and SE Stark St., will help the group finalize the design.

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Both the Big Bang of Peace and the Unity Circle have support from the Village Building Convergence, an annual 10-day

placemaking festival, which aims to strengthen our urban communities through making our environment more welcoming, and sustainable. But while the Unity Circle will be repainted during the convergence, May 23 -June 1, the Big Bang of Peace will be painted later this summer.

The Unity Circle

The Unity Circle first came into being in 2012, the vision of artist Kymberly Jeka. Living near the Haight and Emerson intersection, Jeka knew it marked the spot where DeAndre Clark, 25, had been shot and killed in 2011. And she knew dozens of students travel that route every day, on foot and in school buses. So she dreamed up the street painting as a way to build community and to bring beauty and hope to the intersection.

With support from neighbors the Unity Circle project passed city scrutiny and came to life. Jeka's vision was inspired by the City Repair project, that seeks to build

stronger communities in urban areas by bringing local people together to take control of their neighborhoods and turn them into places where neighbors can gather and enjoy.

In 2012, Jeka succeeded in getting her project underway independently. This time around, the Unity Circle repainting will be part of The Village Building Convergence, City Repair's annual 10-day placemaking festival, where neighbors get together to paint, build, plant and create unique projects that aim to make a neighborhood more friendly and neighborly. The festival, which runs from May 23-June 1 includes more than 30 projects, as well as workshops, music and arts activities.

The Unity Circle street painting and block party will be underway during the weekend of May 31-June 1. Volunteers are needed to paint, lead children's activities, look after food and more. To get involved, contact Kymberly Jeka at kymberlyjeka@gmail.com (858) 705-4418



Choo Fair and Dwight Myrick were part of the group designing the street painting.

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