



MEDIA ADVISORY: For Immediate Release

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ViBe Creative District Commissions 4 New Murals for Title I Schools in Outreach and Equity Effort

(Virginia Beach, VA – March 30) The ViBe Creative District nonprofit announced today that four new murals will be added to Virginia Beach Title I public schools this Spring under the theme Better Together. Due to COVID-19 restrictions limiting in person education outreach to students, the ViBe District nonprofit decided to partner with the school district to provide four local artist the opportunity to paint a mural inside the schools. The goal is to surprise and inspired the students with positive uplifting images after the difficult year of the pandemic and racial discord.

“We recognize that it’s been an exceptionally challenging year for our local students,” said Kate Pittman, Executive Director of the ViBe Creative District. “When in-person educational outreach was not possible due to COVID, our board quickly voted to the repurpose those funds into the Title I school murals. Our goal is to remind the children that their community cares for them and wants to encourage them to think positively and creatively in difficult times.”

The ViBe Creative District published an open call for artists in January 2021 while a lottery system was used to select the four schools. Each school’s principal was allowed to pick the artist and artwork they felt best represented their school.

Virginia Beach City Public Schools will provide a paintable surface which consists of two to three sheets of primed plywood mounted to a wall. Each piece of plywood is 4 feet wide by 8 feet tall creating an overall mural size of 8 feet by 8 feet OR 12 feet wide by 8 feet tall. The mural locations were selected by the schools’ principals to allow for maximum exposure to students.

The ViBe Creative District will provide the selected artist with a \$1,250 paid stipend (\$1,000 for the artist's time and \$250 for paint and materials) which will be paid 50% upon signed agreement and 50% at completion of painting. Upon request, the schools will schedule interviews with the artists and possible student engagement in the classroom. This project is supported by grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts / NEA and the Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission.

Project Theme: BETTER TOGETHER

Artists were asked to submit a design that embraces cultural individuality yet encourages inclusivity. The artwork should speak to the strengths of the Virginia Beach City Public Schools focus on culturally responsive practices to enhance our school and community partnerships.

Mural proposals include positive imagery or quotes to provide an uplifting experience for the students and moment of encouragement when they walk past each day.

"Our partnership with the ViBe Creative District is an exceptional model of how a school district and the community can support one another to create an uplifting message within our school buildings," said Mr. Christopher J. Buhner, Ed. S, Visual Arts Coordinator for Virginia Beach City Public Schools. "All four artists have captured through symbolism and text, artwork that will continue to foster positive relationships and experiences for all our staff and students. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for the support our school district has received from this amazing arts and business community."

Virginia Beach City Public Schools Education Equity Policy is:

Virginia Beach City Public Schools is committed to establishing and sustaining an equitable community that exemplifies the School Division's core values and equity mission to end the predictive value of race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation/gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, disability and to ensure each member of the school community's success. The School Board and the School Division reject all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment as destructive to their core values and strategic goals.

Virginia Beach City Public School's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement:

Virginia Beach City Public Schools will provide and support culturally responsive practices to meet the social emotional needs of all students. Culturally responsive practices bridge the gap between learning and lived culture by focusing on authentic relationships, student experiences, and pedagogy as a way to strengthen student engagement and build a culture that values both individuality and inclusivity. Cultural responsiveness embodies Transformational Learning through a multi-faceted approach that considers leadership, teachers, students, the learning environment, and the community as foundational factors for academic achievement and social empowerment.

ViBe Creative District Equity Statement:

The ViBe Creative District believes in equal access to opportunities that reflect our Virginia Beach community. ViBe highlights diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion as a key focus of its goals and programming. We acknowledge that equity requires deliberately applying time, resources and consideration to achieve this initiative. Social practice engages the creative sector with the community in creating and developing collaborative change.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- Jan 8-18: Call for Artists
- Jan 19-31: Review of Submissions
- Feb: Artists Selections and School Pairings
- March 1-14: Artists Notified
- March 15-31: Principals meet artists / edits to mural designs as needed
- April 2021: Principals and artists coordinate paintings on site in April as available.
- May 2021: Virtual or in person unveilings

Artist Alison Barao will paint for Newtown Elementary School



Allison Barao Bio:

Allison is an educator and a maker based in Virginia Beach, VA. She was born and raised in Northern Virginia and moved to the Hampton Roads area for college. She's been teaching elementary school for the past 6 years. In her spare time, she has been exploring an array of creative projects such as macrame, drawing, and design. All her life she's loved the arts, but has recently developed a passion for textile and digital arts. She finds great joy in seeing her art being enjoyed by family, friends, and strangers alike.

Allison's Mural Concept:

For my mural, I want the students who walk by to see it and read this affirmation daily. I want them to tell themselves that they are loved, smart, and that they belong. I made the background a rainbow to show inclusivity for all students, including LGBTQ children who may feel like they have a harder time navigating at this age. The handprints in each of the "you"s would ideally be handprints from students who attend the school in which the mural hangs, in all different skin toned colors. I would feel honored to paint for students in a Title I school as I, myself, am a teacher at a Title I school in Virginia Beach. Teaching students in Title I schools is my passion and I feel that many students, especially in

this demographic, would benefit from visiting my painting and reading the positive words daily. I also included a rendering of the same idea however, the background is different shades of skin tones and the letters of the words are rainbow print.

Artist David Freeman will paint for Lynnhaven Elementary School



David Freeman's Bio:

My name is David Freeman I'm a artist who resides in Norfolk, Virginia I've been painting with oil paints, canvases and fine art paper since 1993 this is when I decided to explore using these particular materials instead of pencils, markers and crayons. I started out painting mostly musicians and landscapes. I began to display my work through varies outlets such as the internet mostly ebay, Stockley Gardens Art Festival traveling to Venice Beach, California, The Paris Blues Jazz restaurant located in Harlem, New York, The D- Art Center (Norfolk, Virginia), The Lin - Lin Gallery which was located in Norfolk, Va in the Ocean View section and currently I have several pieces in the Artworks Gallery in Richmond, Virginia and I have sold countless paintings to friends, co- workers and family members I also completed a tropical wall mural in The Facilities Management lunchroom at my place of employment.

David's Mural Concept:

The concept of this mural is to visually explain how people from various backgrounds, different ancestries can learn and work together to improve the world and be a positive influence and make a difference in the world this was a rough draft I completed with oil paint and canvas. I believe students should learn to be tolerate of each other and accept each other regardless of race, gender or religion and that's what this painting illustrates.

Artist Summer Paradiso will paint for Bayside Middle School



Summer Paradiso Bio:

Summer is a Virginia Beach native and lifetime artist. Though her educational background is in Social Work and Education, Summer has always strived to expand her knowledge of art through classes at school and local art centers. Summer has been a VBCPS teacher since 2012, and currently works as an art educator at Bayside Middle School and Bayside 6th grade campus.

Summer loves to use bright colors and often creates her works using one continuous line—a symbol to imbue a feeling of connection between all, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, religion, nationality, gender identity, or sexual orientation. She works primarily in acrylic and mixed media and has aspirations of creating more murals and community art to bring a feeling of unity among viewers.

Summer's Mural Concept:

EVERY student is SOMEBODY. Every SOMEBODY has a voice, and it is our job not only to listen, but to lift up and empower each voice to be the most incredible version of themselves. This project is very near and dear to my heart. I am currently the art teacher at a Title I school in Virginia Beach, Bayside Middle School and Bayside 6th grade campus. In the past three years I have noticed the daily hardships that create an uphill battle for many of our students as long term effects of socioeconomic status and ethnic divides. It has been my goal to inspire enthusiasm and courage in each one of these students to feel empowered in their educational journey. Last year I created a mural for the Vibe district where I used one continuous line to draw many different faces. Here, I have used the same concept to indicate that regardless of race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation/gender identity, we are all connected and have an equal right to succeed. I feel the most direct and powerful quote to articulate this connection and empowerment is "I am

somebody“. This was inspired by a poem called “I Am Somebody” by Reverend Williams Holmes Borders. Reverend Jesse Jackson recited portions of this poem in speeches, one of which he recited on Sesame Street in 1971. "I am Somebody! I am Somebody! I may be poor, But I am Somebody. I may be young, But I am Somebody. I may be on welfare, But I am Somebody. I may be small, But I am Somebody. I may have made mistakes, But I am Somebody. My clothes are different, My face is different, My hair is different, But I am Somebody. I am Black, Brown, or White. I speak a different language But I must be respected, protected, never rejected. I am God's child!" There is another “I Am Somebody” mantra by Rita F. Pierson that I find equally powerful: "I am SOMEBODY. I was somebody when I came. I'll be a better somebody when I leave. I am powerful, and I am strong. I DESERVE the education that I get here. I have things to do, people to impress, and places to go." I wish for this mural to be a beacon of hope and inspiration within the school. I want students to walk by the mural every day and say “I am somebody,” with conviction— conviction so strong, this phrase echoes in their minds beyond the four walls of their school and into the rest of their lives. **colors in mural may be changed to suit preferences of school**

Artist Devon Miller will paint for Holland Elementary School



Devon Miller Bio:

Devon Miller is a fine artist and graphic designer turned art educator from Virginia Beach. She loves to share art with her community through design, mixed media work and mural art. Having competed several projects in VB's ViBe Creative District, she thinks that art should be accessible and enjoyed by everyone.

Devon's Mural concept: My mural proposal(s) is designed to promote celebration of diversity and individuality. My main subject is the hands - used commonly as way to represent us as humans and also works to keep the design simple, allowing color and symbols to surround them. I made each hand a different skin tone to represent multiple races, and tried to add accessories to show a bit of personality/individuality (as space allowed). These hands are stacked together, representing community and teamwork — reminding us that we are better together. For the surrounding space, I worked in icons that represent either school subjects, interests/hobbies, and symbols of growth (sun

and plants). My hope is that every student or viewer will find a symbol that they can relate to in this piece. It's important that the students feel that this mural is for them as individuals as well as for them as a community. "Peace," "Hope," "Love," "Diversity" (was also considering replacing with RESPECT*), and "Kindness" are written across the arms - all words that students should know, spread, and live by throughout their lives. I've uploaded two versions of the same layout: one in full color with a white or solid background, and one with a rainbow background. Both have a few more open spaces for icons that will be filled - these could relate directly to the school if the Principal/staff/students have something in mind! I am completely open to changing out words/colors/symbols as appropriate for the location. Finally, on to why I would love the opportunity to paint a mural at one of our Title 1 schools. I am a career switcher: a 9 year graphic design professional turned art educator (this is my first full year teaching!). I love the arts and they play such an important role in our lives - the more that I worked with community art, the more I realized that I wanted to encourage young people to create. This doesn't mean that I just want to teach students that already love art to become better artists... I want to reach the students that are feeling discouraged, the ones that are disadvantaged, the ones that need an outlet and a support system (something all kids deserve!). THESE are the students that art could potentially benefit the most - I want my classes to be an opportunity for students to communicate and reflect on themselves, their struggles, and to discuss and celebrate their differences. Even more than that, with everything going on since March 2020, students are missing their classrooms and support systems... their safe space. Coming back to their classes to see a beautiful new mural reminding them how much better we all are TOGETHER is such an important statement. Our kids are our future, and I know that we can teach them to not only recognize, respect and learn about each others differences, but to CELEBRATE them... because there really is so much to celebrate.

About the ViBe Creative District

The ViBe Creative District non-profit is a 501c3 that exists to promote, support, connect, and inspire the creative industries to boost our local economy, grow jobs, and enhance our quality of life. It works to create and revive economic vibrancy in our neighborhood with a remarkable local vibe. Additionally, ViBe strives to enhance a place of discovery for locals and visitors along with economic vitality to meet the City of Virginia Beach's vision for a quality resort destination. For more information on please visit www.ViBeCreativeDistrict.org, email info@ViBeCreativeDistrict.org call 757-202-9533 or follow ViBe Creative District on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ViBeCreativeDistrict and Instagram at www.instagram.com/thevibecreativedistrict/

