

CB CARES

The Art of Community Building

When Richard Reif, CEO and president of Doylestown Hospital, and N. Robert Laws, Central Bucks School District superintendent, founded CB Cares 14 years ago, their mission was simple. The non-profit organization would “serve as a community catalyst in building upon our community’s assets and strengths in order to create a healthier community.”

These days, Executive Director Kimberly Chambra is busy carrying on Laws and Reif’s vision by focusing primarily on the youth in the community. Through various programs and volunteer opportunities that aim at enriching their lives and promoting both personal and social growth, Chambra and her team are making a difference.

As part of their efforts, CB Cares has adopted the 40 Assets philosophy, a program developed by the Minneapolis-based Search Institute. The group, like CB Cares, devotes themselves to the betterment of youth and community building. Their guide promotes 40 positive experiences and qualities that aid children and teens in making wise, positive decisions and helps them grow into caring, responsible individuals.

And while it might seem difficult to focus on one area with such a wide array of issues facing today’s younger generation, Chambra has recently concentrated her efforts on the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention Program. Teaming with the CB Cares Community Arts series featuring youths dedicated to tackling the perceptions and misconceptions of social norms through art, a peer-to-peer messaging campaign was born.

But for all their motivation, a medium was still needed. Chambra finally settled on



Student volunteers working on CB Cares’ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. day of service.

a mural and solicited the help of Amanda Layre, a local artist and teacher, who then hand picked her six best middle and high school art students. Together, they settled upon a simple yet effective message: “Don’t Pollute Yourself.”

When the students were delivered the anti-drug and alcohol theme, Layre assured them, “We’re just going to have to make it cool.” Each took home a smaller version of the finished canvas sized to scale and then chose each other’s favorite ideas. According to Layre, the entire process was a collaborative effort.

Layre says she wanted the mural to come entirely from the six students she selected based on their ability and maturity. The students came from all three Central Bucks high schools, Lenape and Tohickon middle schools and another middle school in Perkasie. And despite their sometimes intra-school rivalries, teamwork was the secret to their success. “They all came together and worked together quite nicely,” says Layre.



Art students at work on CB Cares’ “Don’t Pollute Yourself” mural at this year’s Doylestown Arts Festival.

Introducing elements of environmental awareness into the project and playing on the obvious metaphor, they launched the project at this year’s Doylestown Arts Festival, making it the first artistic project completed on-site. “There’s never been any art actually being made during the festival,” Chambra says. Layre was amazed when they finished almost half the project by the final day of the event.

The now-finished mural will be showcased at various locations throughout the county, including all five schools that the artists attend, as well as the Doylestown Library, the courthouse and Doylestown Hospital. Chambra hopes that locations subject to high foot traffic will provide the best venue to spotlight the students’ work.

In addition to the Drug-Free Community project, CB Cares will also be launching

their Milk Money campaign in December. Families can support CB Cares by contributing a mere 50 cents a month, the cost of a carton of milk in local schools. Instead of “Got Milk?” Chambra says CB Cares asks, “Got Assets?”

In January – in what has grown into one of the biggest days for the organization – CB Cares honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by holding a day of service. The volunteer-based projects are geared toward individuals and groups, for parents and students alike, crossing generational lines in the hopes of creating positive change. In years past, activities have included a Buck County Free Library “winter spruce up,” cookie baking at the Plumsteadville Grange and wrapping colorful packages at Gayman Elementary School for the troops overseas. *d*

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