

'Messy Hands' create murals for library expansion

By David Lias

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When the construction work that is currently underway at the Vermillion City Library is eventually complete, the newly expanded building will have a roomier, modern children's section.

It's fitting that the art that will hang on the new walls inside that children's area is designed and created by local kids.

Participants in the Messy Hands Art Camp, held last week at the Washington Streets Arts Center, created two large mosaic murals that are destined to be installed in the children's section of the library once the building project is complete.

The mosaic project, directed by Nancy Losacker with assistance from Michelle Mechling, involved the drawing of designs by the young artists and the cutting of pieces of colored glass tiles. The tiles were then glued to large pieces of

plywood to transform them into works of art.

Losacker came up with the overall design of the two mosaics, which feature landscape scenes of the prairie in the Vermillion area along the Missouri River.

The children taking part in the art camp drew panels that are set inside the murals. Each panel depicts a different animal or plant that calls the countryside or river its home.

"I designed the piece for the children, and then they have been doing the inserts that go inside each mural," she said. "In conjunction with the painting class here, the kids all did drawings of different animals and trees"

The colored drawings that were chosen to be included in each mural were recreated using cut pieces of colored glass tiles. Each drawing comes to life, piece by piece, as a variety of colored tiles are cut into hundreds of different shapes and sizes, much like very small puzzle pieces.

All of those "puzzle" pieces are glued to the plywood and the end product is a colorful mosaic, fitting for the city library's walls.

"After we laid each drawing out in glass, we put them on the board and laid the background into it," Losacker said.

That "background" work was one of the main tasks of the youngest participants in the camp. Older kids drew and painted trees, flowers and animals that will be featured in panels located inside each mural.

One mosaic, Losacker said, is designed to represent the Missouri River with its sandbars. Farmers' large fields figure prominently in the background, reaching to a large expanse of blue sky.

Owen Mechling, Sophie Dudley, and Tom Dahlseid were busy Tuesday, June 26, gluing the cut pieces of glass tiles into place.

Once the glue holding the cut glass panels is fully dry, the mosaics will be grouted.



Tom Dahlseid, Sophie Dudley and Owen Mechling glue pieces of glass tiles into place to create mosaic art that will eventually find its way on a wall of the newly expanded Vermillion City Library. This art project was one of many activities completed by local youth who participated in the Messy Hands Art Camp held last week at the Washington Street Arts Center. (Photo by David Lias)

They will be kept at the Washington Street Arts Center until the library expansion project is complete.

They will take up a significant amount of empty wall space in the larger, improved library. Each mural

is 5-feet 6-inches wide, and 4-foot deep.

"This is still a work in progress," Losacker said last Tuesday. "But they should be finished soon."

The Vermillion Area Arts Council (VAAC) and

individual members of Vermillion's Rotary Club have provided financial support for the project. The VAAC encourages inquiries, and additional community sponsorship to ensure that this project is completed.

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