



Mural brightens centre's walls

Youth collaborate to design and paint accent wall at community health centre

By Jim Humphrey
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The Vaughan Community Health Centre has a bright new addition.

Its new youth mural was unveiled last week.

The project initiative was designed to engage local youngsters and provide them with the opportunity to showcase and celebrate their creativity.

Participants a decorative mosaic using a variety of paint materials, colours and textures to reflect their vision of a healthy community. Youth were encouraged to include aspects of their environment and images of diversity.

One of the young artists, Batul Mohamedali, thought the project was completely unique compared to anything she has been a part of in the past.



ARTIST David Di Benedetto, right, with teen artists Lynnda Bui and Batul Mohamedali, speaks about the creation of the Vaughan Community Health Care Centre Youth Mural at its unveiling. (Jim Humphrey/Vaughan Today)

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"It was really different," she says. "I got to learn and express myself and help out with something that was a good cause."

The vibrant-coloured mural extends five metres across the centre's youth room, which is dedicated to providing youth with space for programming and educational resources on various health/social related topics.

Lead artist on the project David Di Benedetto said the creation of the mural



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was a collaborative approach.

"The project provided a very unique experience for me just from how the mural was put together from developing the ideas with the youth, having them learn the creative process and design process by modifying it, critiquing it and refining it while doing community outreach with local artists," he says. "All of the projects that I have done in the past have had a predetermined goal or imagery. This time we just went in with a general concept and had the youth develop the imagery and had them create the end goal, so it became their creative vision which was amazing."

Councillor Tony Carella, chair of the board of directors of the health centre, is pleased with how the project turned out.

"I think it is an excellent project," he says. "We have three target communities that have been identified by the ministry and been assigned to us: seniors, youth and those with mental health and addiction issues."

Out of those three groups, Carella identified youth as the most difficult to connect with.

"I think a project like this that engages a half dozen youth from different parts of town to create something like this is a wonderful thing," he says.

With this first project finished, Carella wants to keep doing these types of initiatives to strengthen the relationships with different groups in the community.

"We are still in the outreach mode," he says of the health centre. "We have done a pretty good job in terms of community profiles and are getting a pretty good idea of what programs (are needed).

"We are a primary healthcare centre and are at about 60 percent of our capacity within a year, which is amazing. But there is a whole other element to a community health care centre and that is programming and that is a service that can be delivered outside or here. This is one step to connect with those communities."

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