

Young artists get taste of 'urban' Graffiti art ahead of Youth Centre opening



By Brock Weir

Graffiti is often the scourge of civic leaders everywhere, but it will have pride of place in Aurora's Community Space for Youth when it opens this fall.

Students from across Aurora were shaking cans of spray paint into a frenzy at Lambert Willson Park, just behind where the youth space is slated to be when complete, as part of Aurora's Canada Day Celebrations.

'Urban Art Aurora' was dreamed up by Franco DeMarco, Youth Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. Earlier this spring, calls for applicants were put out to local elementary and secondary schools looking for kids to be creative.

With the group selected, they began meeting in early June to brainstorm ideas they wanted to convey in spray paint for these and future generations to see when they walked through the doors of their own space. The theme at the centre of the banner: 'Youth Rising'.

Although their goal was to finish painting the banner by the time evening festivities kicked into high gear, they ran a little bit short, meaning the group will be meeting again in September to finish things up. By mid-afternoon, however, the teens were busy at work spraying soccer balls, hockey sticks, musical notes, album lyrics, and even a binary code with a secret message for all Aurorans to decode, into reality.

'It was a great opportunity,' said Reilly Carey, an Aurora High School student who enters Grade 10 in September. 'I am very artistic, so this has been a chance to show my artwork more than in just a small art show. This will be in the Youth Centre for quite a while, which is absolutely amazing, and I got to work with such a great group of people. I wish I invited more of my friends in! It is just so awesome to be putting my mark on Aurora in more ways than one.'

Graffiti was new to Reilly, but one wouldn't know it from the way she wielded the spray can. Nevertheless, she said she wanted to do it because it gave her the chance to get the feel for the art form in a 'controlled environment'.

'I know I am not going to get arrested and Aurora wouldn't judge me for it!' she said. 'We're trying to keep it as anonymous as possible, we're not going to have any initials on it, so even if I completely fail at this, it will still be a good try.'

Reilly's section was music and the group chose to express this not just through notes, but selected song lyrics to represent their generation.

Also on hand as the clock ran down on Canada Day were Victoria Petinarelis, a Grade 11 student from St. Maximillian Kolbe Catholic High School, and brothers Brandon and Cameron Weeks, Grade 12 and Grade 9 students respectively at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School.

Brandon and Cameron were largely in charge of the bottom of the banner, which depicts not only the binary code but also skylines and streetscapes.

"You can figure out what the binary numbers mean," said Cameron, issuing a challenge. "It's not inappropriate, don't worry!"

Asked what it would be like to have this hanging in the future Youth Space, Cameron said it would be "absolutely splendiferous and fantastical."

Added Victoria: "It will have an impact for sure because it is so big and colourful, it will be a great eye catcher."

Looking on as the students got ready to call it a day, DeMarco said Urban Art Aurora was a success and something he would like to see carried on for the future.

"It's definitely the plan to [make this an annual event]," he said. "This time we were set on Canada Day, but maybe we want to look to get involved in Ribfest or summer Concerts in the Park. This has been very good and hopefully each year we will be adding to the canvasses in our Youth Centre."