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Photo by Eva Wasney

West End BIZ mural mentors Annie Beach and Brianna Wentz created "Reflections of Connections" on Clifton Street with the help more than 70 neighbourhood youth.

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Mural creates connections

BY EVA WASNEY STAFF REPORTER

WEST END

Larger-than-life bubbles, cultural diversity and idyllic scenes of community are featured in a colourful new mural on Clifton Street.

The public art piece, titled *Reflections of Connections*, was created by University of Manitoba fine arts students Annie Beach and Brianna Wentz as part of the West End BIZ's mural mentorship program. This is the second year the artists have been involved with the summer program.

"It really emphasizes togetherness and celebrating being with each other in a respectful and kind manner," Beach said of the inspiration behind the artwork.

More than 70 West End youth from various programs in the neighbourhood helped create the mural, which was unveiled to the public on July 31. A handful of participants attended the unveiling and many were quick to point out their signature or self-portrait in the details of the piece.

"It's exciting to have a grand finale to cap off the project," Wentz said. "The program engages the youth of the community and it's really helpful because it gives kids something to do in the summer to stay out of trouble and it's a way for them to stay engaged with art even when they're not in school."

Thirteen-year-old Kyrra Kematch got involved in the program because she likes to paint as a hobby.

"It was really fun, you feel included in everything," she said.

Kematch says she stopped by the wall at 595 Clifton St. "basically everyday" over the course of five weeks to help with the project and improve her painting skills.

"Painting the bubbles with all the colours in it was kind of difficult because you need the perfect amount of water and paint," she said.

The BIZ has been running the mural mentorship program for 18 years with the goal of beautifying the area and connecting artists with young people.

"It's an opportunity for our art students to get some real experience and exposure and to teach community youth what art is all about," BIZ executive director Gloria Cardwell-Hoeppner said.

There are more than 100 murals in the West End thanks to the BIZ's mentorship and professional art programs. More murals



Photo by Eva Wasney

Brianna Wentz and Annie Beach pose for a photo with West End BIZ mural mentorship participant Kyrra Kematch (centre).

often mean less graffiti for residents and business owners, according to Cardwell-Hoeppner.

"You can take a blank wall and put something pretty on there and you know it's not going to get tagged," she said. The wall for the mural was donated and

sponsored by David Lee, owner of Optima Professional Solutions.

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