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Photo by Kelsey James

Skylar Park (left) and Take Pride Winnipeg! executive director Tom Ethans, pictured at the unveiling of a new mural honouring Park's taekwondo career. Take Pride Winnipeg! and Canadian Tire sponsored the mural, which features five images of the athlete celebrating her first Olympic appearance and the Park family's south Winnipeg taekwondo studio.

BY KELSEY JAMES
STAFF REPORTER

LINDEN WOODS

A mural honouring Olympian and rising taekwondo star Skylar Park has been installed in south Winnipeg.

"It feels crazy, and it's kind of weird to see my face up there, but I think it's incredible and I'm super thankful to everyone whose been involved in making this happen," Park told *The Sou'wester*.

The mural was installed on the side of the TRP Academy, Tae Ry-

ong Park, at 95 Scurfield Blvd.

The taekwondo academy belongs to the Park family and is where the 22-year-old has trained since childhood, she said at the unveiling ceremony on Nov. 6.

Park brought home gold at the Lima 2019 Pan American Games

and went on to compete at her first Olympic Games earlier this summer in Tokyo.

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Art show explores domestic violence

BY KELSEY JAMES
STAFF REPORTER

TUXEDO

A North Kildonan resident is breaking the silence on domestic violence.

Zita Somakoko, a domestic violence survivor and advocate against gender-based violence, hosted the first *Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence* community forum in 2018.

“The event was born in the heat of tragedy,” Somakoko told *The Sou’wester*. “I was watching the news in 2015 and a woman was killed, gunned down, by her ex-husband.

“I lost it. I started wailing. I just couldn’t believe we are still dealing with this and it’s normal, just a split second on the news.”

Somakoko’s forum began as a simple conversation before turning into the art show it is today.

“Music speaks to our soul and every piece of art is a type of communication,” she said.

“What I try to do is find any way possible to draw attention to this issue.”

This year’s *Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence* exhibit will open Nov. 19 at the Canadian Mennonite University’s MHC Gallery, located at 610 Shaftesbury Boulevard, beginning at 7 p.m.

Those interested in attending must provide proof of vaccination. The opening ceremony can be viewed on Zoom.

The show will run until Jan. 15, 2022, and features over 30 artists highlighting the plight of domestic violence in Manitoba. While the MHC Gallery exhibit focuses on visual art, there will also be workshops, presentations and performances, including poetry, dance and music.

Every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. From January to June 2021, Manitoba recorded five deaths, and last year saw the highest number of sexual assaults amongst youth. Winnipeg Police Service also recorded 1,695 domestic violence victims during the pandemic.



Supplied photo

After the Storm by Charlie Johnston is one piece included in the Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence art exhibit.

“That’s not even Manitoba, so imagine the numbers province-wide,” Somakoko said. “We talk about our province having the highest number of violent crimes in the nation. When we say this, people think vandalism, drugs or gangs, but 85 per cent of these are actually domestic violence related.”

Somakoko believes the issue isn’t getting enough attention when talking about crime, and that’s what her forum is all about.

“Every year, I’m looking for activities that will pull people into this conversation and shine a light on the reality about violence against women and girls in our province,” Somakoko said. “That doesn’t mean we don’t have violence against men and boys, because we do, but the highest rate is against girls and women.”

Aside from the exhibition and performances, workshops are tailored toward youth, the media and the Winnipeg Police Service.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/breakingsdv

New mural celebrates Winnipeg Olympian

Continued from front page

Take Pride Winnipeg! and Canadian Tire sponsored the mural. It features five images of Park celebrating her first Olympic appearance and the family’s south Winnipeg taekwondo academy. The top of the mural reads: “We all play for Canada.”

“I want to thank Canadian Tire for supporting me on my journey and making this happen,” Park said. “I was a part of their ‘We all play for Canada’ campaign, so to have this mural where I learned to play and where I first started taekwondo is incredible.”

Park said her family worked closely with Canadian Tire and the mural’s artist to make sure the finished product represented her and her values.

“I wasn’t sure what to expect, so to finally see it all put together is incredible. I was able to see the process and see it from the very beginning until now,” Park said. “It means a lot to have the mural here and know that it can inspire the next generation of athletes.”

The piece took artist Jennifer Mosienko five weeks to complete. She painted most of it in her backyard on panels resting on a giant easel.

Mosienko, who has created about 30 pieces for Take Pride Winnipeg!, said Park is the youngest female athlete to be featured on a mural in Winnipeg, and she really wanted the portraits to do her justice.

“We went through a few images, the family had a few images and we put it together basically creating a collage,” Mosienko said. “The Parks are an amazing family, and they

really got Skylar to where she is.”

Take Pride Winnipeg! executive director Tom Ethans said the organization was approached by Canadian Tire to help fund the mural and highlight Park’s accomplishment.

“I got the artist, Jennifer Mosienko, to meet with the Park family to get a feel for the kind of person she was and then translate it into this mural,” Ethans said. “I didn’t know what it would look like, but the finished product is fantastic.

“I think it’s very important to highlight our young athletes and people who want to go out there and do positive things and make a difference.”

Take Pride Winnipeg! has commissioned over 300 murals in Winnipeg and some outside of the city, as well.

For more information, visit www.takepride.mb.ca



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