



CULTIVATING YOUTH AS CREATIVE WORKFORCE WWW.ARTS-STREET.ORG
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASEMay 20, 2009

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TAGGING AND MURAL ART?

Urban Arts 'Show Down' Plays up Art Experiences

DENVER –Arts Street is looking for partners and participants for **OFF the WALL -- Urban Art Festival**, an art mural contest designed to draw young artists away from tagging private and public property. This friendly competition and community event will explain Art is human expression. Tagging is simply marking a spot.

OFF the WALL -- Urban Art "Show Down" is scheduled for July 18 at Lincoln Park, near the LaAlma Rec Center at 11th & Mariposa, in conjunction with a free city concert the 6th Annual *Latino Rhythms*. The concert will run from noon to 4 p.m. and is expected to draw more than 4,000 people.

Up to 20 teams can participate in the daylong event. Each team will present sketches and be required to meet broad guidelines that will ensure meaningful content. The teams of up to six artists each will be given a 4 x 8 foot panel, paints (all cans will be tagged to the team and will be returned to the organizers) and a cash stipend for participation. And, they'll gain exposure for their art. A panel of established local mural artists will judge the top prizes, and several Peoples' Choice prizes will be awarded.

Throughout the day, art organizations and entertainment will complement the painting projects. Wahoo's Fish Taco will provide lunch for team members, and sponsor a team.

Each of the 20 teams will be seeking a commercial sponsor who can provide tee shirts and the cost of printing them with team-designed logos and messages. With little expense, a sponsor can have its name in front of thousands of people in the park that day. NewSpeak, a tattoo and art gallery, is our first team sponsor.

“Denver spends about \$2 million per year on graffiti abatement,” said Stella Yu, Executive Director of Arts Street, the organizer of the event. “The neighborhood around La Alma is one of the highest tagged areas, and the city statistics show the problem is increasing each year. They’ve stepped up abatement and punishment, but haven’t seen an effect. The Urban Arts Festival is about prevention. It will give young artists the chance to act as agents of change.”

“One mural isn’t going to solve the problem,” said Bob Luna, art teacher at La Alma Rec Center. “We need to send a clear message that tagging and vandalism are different from art. And open a conduit to resources where kids can learn more about art.”

In order to show alternatives to tagging and highlight resources to young artists, the urban arts festival is seeking community arts organizations to be team supporters. Acting as hosts, cheerleaders or gofers, these organizations can gain exposure to their programs and make connections with up and coming artists. Throughout the day, there are several opportunities to show off talent, advertise programs, and network.

Arts Street is a nonprofit organization that promotes youth creativity by channeling it to healthy alternatives, productive change and technology training to produce a smarter workforce. The OFF the WALL – Urban Art event will present young artists with an alternative means to earn fame and respect by crediting them with media and public acknowledgement, encourage civic contribution, provide opportunities to sell their art and win awards.

In 2008, the city of Denver removed more than 4 million square feet of graffiti. With hopes of minimizing this burden, Arts Street is organizing this event, and appreciates support from the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs, LaAlma Rec Center, the LaAlma Lincoln Park Planning Group, West High Mural Club, Denver Partners Against Graffiti, Indy Ink, Denver City Council members Judy Montero and Paul Lopez and Denver Parks & Recreation.

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