

Local youths help create art for KC's new East Patrol police campus

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Artist David Dahlquist brought the community together recently to work on ceramic bowls that will be a central part of the East Patrol police campus artwork. COURTESY OF DAVID DAHLQUIST OF RDG DESIGN

The East Patrol police campus, currently under construction at 27th Street and Prospect Avenue in Kansas City, has fostered some hard feelings and resentment from longtime residents who had to move to make way for the project.

But David Dahlquist, a Des Moines, Iowa, artist commissioned to design the public art for East Patrol, believes fervently that art can be a source of healing and community-building. To that end, Dahlquist and associates from RDG Dahlquist Art Studio are involving local youths and East Patrol neighbors in the creation of the ceramic art that will adorn the entryway to the facility.

“It’s asking the community to be invested in it,” he said. “The piece is about something peaceful, contemplative.”

That creative process was recently in full view at a pottery “mud throw” event at Kansas City’s Arts Tech, 1522 Holmes St.

“Sling that mud!” Arts Tech Executive Director Dave Sullivan commanded as community members hunched over 25 pottery wheels Wednesday afternoon to fashion ceramic bowls that will be a key feature of the East Patrol art project. Sullivan was Dahlquist’s Kansas City connection in organizing the pottery activity last week that was expected to involve about 200 local adults and youths.

Volunteers from the Kansas City Art Institute, the KC Clay Guild and other arts groups helped coach novices who had never used a pottery wheel before but who relished working with the clay.

“That was really awesome,” said 16-year-old Kyharra Williams after she successfully completed a bowl with some assistance from Dahlquist. “It takes a lot of focus, but it’s really fun.”

Williams came to the event with friends from Morning Star Baptist Church, which is near the construction site. She said she could understand the frustration of people who had to move, but she thinks having a police station and crime lab will be good for the neighborhood.

“I think it’s always positive to have more security,” she said.

Priscilla Gross, who lives not far from the construction site and also attends Morning Star, brought her two grandchildren to the pottery event.

“I think this is phenomenal,” Gross said of the community’s involvement in the art work for the campus.

“We have done something. I am so proud,” she said. “I can say, ‘I did that one.’”

Gross loves arts and crafts projects but had never shaped a bowl before. She and her grandchildren savored the process of sculpting the clay into a bowl.

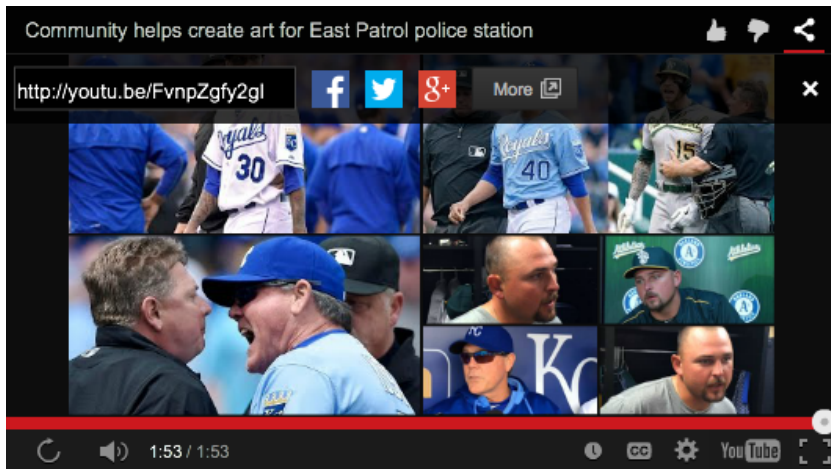
“It’s fun, and it’s messy,” said her 10-year-old grandson, Travis Pace, who was eager to make a second bowl after he showed off his first.

Not all the amateur artists will have their work featured in the final product, but Dahlquist said they will know they played a part. And he was encouraged that many of the bowls were turning out well.

Dahlquist leads the RDG Dahlquist Art Studio and is a seasoned veteran whose firm was chosen in a competitive national search for the \$425,000 One Percent for Art contract for East Patrol.

He has an extensive public art background and said it is always his practice to use a public-engagement process. In addition to ceramics and other materials, the East Patrol project will feature an installation with poetry from Kansas City poet and author Glenn North.

Details for the installation schedule are still being worked out. The process is expected to span several months late this summer and fall. The police station is expected to open early next year.



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