

ARTS AND CULTURE

# Community mural project starts in Upper Darby



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A portion of the wall that will be used for the 135-foot long mural along a walkway leading to 69th Street.



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A rough mockup of a portion of the mural includes images of the high school drumline, the Summer Stage program and a hand with a henna tattoo.



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Another look at a mural mockup that includes the Swedish Log Cabin on the left and the Collenbrook Farm house on the right.

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**UPPER DARBY »** A large splash of colors will decorate a wall in the heart of the 69th Street business district in Upper Darby.

Community volunteers this week started to paint a 135-foot long mural that will incorporate the history and international identities of Upper Darby Township along the wall of a building at 44 S. 69th St. This art installation is at a section of heavy foot traffic as it is located right next to a commercial parking garage and right up the street from the Tower Theater and the 69th Street Transportation Center.

The mural will include depictions of the Swedish Log Cabin, Collenbrook Farm, the Tower Theater, the high school drumline and other elements of the Upper Darby community. Faces of its iconic star children, like

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— Upper Darby School District art teacher Christina Roberts who is taking the lead to design and create the mural

Emmy-winner Tina Fey, will be incorporated into the mural, as will the spelling of “hello” in 60 different languages.

“I’ve never painted something this large and I’ve never had anything public,” said Upper Darby School District art teacher Christina Roberts who is taking the lead to design and create the mural. “I’ve painted murals in my school, but this is out there.”

She continued, “There’s already so much going on that I didn’t want it to be overwhelming. I wanted it to be simple and I wanted it to be easy for people to walk by and enjoy it, not just be so tight. I wanted it to be loose and look like it’s hand painted.”

The mural corresponds to a community development plan for the downtown Upper Darby region. A grant from AARP in the amount



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This large hand will be detailed with henna tattoo markings in recognition of the strong Indian subcontinent population in the Upper Darby community and surrounding neighborhoods.

of \$4,000 was awarded for the project.

Upper Darby Administrator for Community Business and Economic Development Tamara Crump said many people had been feeding the idea and she helped pull it together.

“This really means a lot to me. I think that it has given us the opportunity to say we care about the arts, that spaces in Upper Darby are important and we want this space ... to be a welcoming spot,” said Crump. “We’re welcoming you into our en-

tertainment and shopping district. It means that we’re paying attention and our township matters to us, even these little spaces like this.

“The fact that it’s community members putting it up there says to me that we all care.”

Volunteers from the Upper Darby Community Outreach Corps, Multicultural Family Services, Upper Darby Arts and Education Foundation Service Club, Bywood Community Association, The Arts Education Foundation Board, Upper Darby International Festival committee and the Upper Darby Multicultural Commission have been helping with the mural.

The mural is expected to be completed before the township’s third annual international festival on Sept. 28.