

EagleTribune.com, North Andover, MA

August 3, 2010

Youth put their artistic touch on trash cans

By Yadira Betances

ybetances@eagletribune.com

—
LAWRENCE — Sitting on the pavement with brushes and cans of brown, beige, green and yellow paint around him, Omar Hernandez looked at an image on his cell phone and traced it with a black pencil.

Next, he used a brush dripping with paint to color it in.

Hernandez's work of art is not on a canvas or a wall, but on a garbage can that had been painted white. He was painting one of six trash barrels part of a campaign called, "Pick it Up and Throw It In."

Spencer Buchholz, community organizer for Lawrence CommunityWorks, said residents of the North Common neighborhood came up with the idea for the colorful cans after noticing garbage on their streets was getting out of control.

"These guys are the next generation to run the city and if they take ownership now, they can be ambassadors and create change," Buchholz said.

Omar Hernandez, a student in the Performing and Fine Arts Academy at Lawrence High, painted the video game character Donkey Kong with a large palm tree. Another group painted an ocean scene, complete with a large purple octopus and a bright yellow sun shining over pale blue water.

Dinauris Aponte, 13, who will be in the eighth grade at the Leonard School this fall, Shanika Aponte and Carina Jaime, both 14 and incoming freshmen at Notre Dame High School, drew four scenes, each depicting a different season.

"If we don't clean it up, who else will?" Shanika said. She said the group chose the seasons because the barrels will be used year-round.

Carina Jaime said she likes using her creative talents for a good cause.

"Kids who throw trash and litter may find the cans cool and use them to throw away their trash," Carina said.

Lawrence Senior Center plans to take two of the cans and place them on Haverhill Street.

Martin Puello, who sells Italian ice from a pushcart at Jackson and Haverhill streets, will take one, too.

"I want to serve as an example for others," said Puello, who has had the stand at that corner for 22 years. "It's important that we help keep the city clean because by doing that, we help ourselves and others."

His trash barrel has special meaning as his son, also named Martin, 22, designed it.

A dozen youth are working on the project as part of a joint effort by the Lawrence Senior Center, Greater Lawrence Community Health Center, Lawrence CommunityWorks, Groundwork Lawrence Green Team and Lawrence Youth Volunteer Corps. Jackson Lumber, White Street Paint and Lawrence General Hospital donated the materials for the project.

"I lived in the city and care about the city," said Martha Velez, director of the Senior Center, as her reason for participating. "No one person can do it all, but with every grain of salt we can help build a hill."

• • •

Join the discussion. To comment on stories and see what others are saying, log on to eagletribune.com.