

A Mural for the Ages

Young and old come together to create a mural of hope.

by [KIMBERLY KIM](#)

When senior citizens, University of Memphis students, and students from BRIDGES-PeaceJam youth conference recently painted a mural of Nobel Peace Prize recipients, the group included 1997 Nobel winner Jody Williams.

The Hope Mural, painted on a wall at the Davis Community Center in the university area, began with a series of postcards.

In January, the U of M art department asked members of Creative Aging, the Mason YMCA, and BRIDGES to design postcards that communicated individual and collective visions of hope. The multi-generational participants also exchanged the postcards with one another.

After the postcards were completed, a design team then worked with muralist and guest artist John Jota Leanos to integrate the postcards into a mural design. The team also decided to include portraits of Nobel Peace Prize winners.

"We should honor those who have come before us," says Leanos, an assistant professor at California College of the Arts. "We should strive to be as wise and as productive as [the Nobel Peace Prize winners] have become."

The mural also is an opportunity to focus on hopes and dreams, individually and collectively, says U of M Art Education Program coordinator Donalyn Heise: "We have much to learn from each other. By linking young and old across socioeconomic status, we learn and get a sense of who we are in relation to others. We can see things from multiple perspectives."

The mural was a joint project between the U of M and the 2009 BRIDGES-PeaceJam Mid-South Youth Conference at Rhodes College. The conference, held February 21- 22, focused on Williams' work on the international treaty to ban the use of land mines, as well as 11 other Nobel Peace laureates.

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