

# H-F High art project put larger-than-life smiles on display

BY MARILYN THOMAS

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On June 1, students from Homewood-Flossmoor High School put more than 100 smiling faces of residents on display in Homewood and Flossmoor as part of the “Smiles Are Contagious” project.

Homewood’s display was on the west wall of Ridgewood Tap at the corner of Ridge Road and Harwood Avenue. Flossmoor’s photo installation was on the village hall at 2800 Flossmoor Road.

“Smiles Are Contagious” was the final project of the Fine Arts Department’s MVP class at H-F. It also is part of the international InsideOut Project that has had similar larger-than-life headshots on display in 138 countries. Students used social media and word-of-mouth to reach out to residents who would agree to be photographed.

Student photographers took the individuals’ pictures and the files were sent to New York, the headquarters for InsideOut, where the 4.5- by 3-foot black and white photos were printed and returned to H-F.

The installation the morning of Wednesday, June 1, got off to a slow start. There was a run to a store for a supply of paste. Once the installation process began, students Maggie Cutrara, Jenna Prado, Ximena Sanchez, Alyssa Freeman and Grace Opyd, working in Homewood, realized their original location wouldn’t work because the wall was stucco – no way to smooth out a photo – so the crew moved their supplies to the Ridgewood Tap location.

After installing 28 photos, the crew faced another dilemma – they were running out of wall space that they could easily reach. Installation of the remaining 20-plus photos was June 2, on the north side of the former Suzie’s Hallmark store at 18065 Harwood Avenue.

In Flossmoor, the team found that the brick was very porous, so they experimented with how best to get the photo to hold to the wall. Students Ellen Holnhoner, Philo Zarkenormian and Mia Johnson-Chaison got help from Flossmoor Public Works staff Ryan Jones, Mariano Ramos, Blasé Tucker and Chris D’Apice. After much trial and er-



Marilyn Thomas/H-F Chronicle  
Ellen Holnhoner, left, Philo Zarkenormian, kneeling, and Chris D’Apice of Flossmoor Public Works, smooth out a photo after they placed it onto the Flossmoor Village Hall wall.

ror, they got a system going and were able to install the 55 photos at village hall.

The students were having fun with the project, despite the paste on their hands.

“I didn’t come with any expectations. I’m having fun,” said Zarkenormian. Johnson-Chaison wished more of the

class members came to help, but she shrugged her shoulders, said it all worked out and she was happy with their efforts.

Teacher J.R. Willard-Rose, who oversaw the project, was glad it finally came to fruition after being put on hold in 2020 due to the pandemic.

“This is really great,” he said as he surveyed the Homewood display on June 1. “The kids did a great job. The photos look great.

“Just during the installation we’ve had so many cars stop by and ask what’s going on. That’s really the whole point – to get people curious and smiling. I’m really excited and happy,” he said.

This was a temporary exhibit. Photos came down as they were affected by the weather.

“The main goal was to have them up for the Artisan Street Fair (June 3 and 4) which successfully they were,” said Homewood events manager Alissa Opyd. “We have had only positive responses to the public art initiative, and I do believe it brought a smile to all.”

*Eric Crump contributed to this story.*

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