



Madeira Board of Education, 7465 Loannes Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45243
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May 2, 2024

Murals with a Mission

Madeira High School (MHS) recently had the honor of being selected by the Cincinnati Reds and PNC Bank to participate in a powerful student-led design and art project.

'Murals with a Mission' was launched in 2022 with the goal of using the power of art to convey positive social messages tailored to students through painting murals. MHS is the sixth school in Cincinnati/ Northern Kentucky area to participate in the initiative - along with high schools in Mason, Princeton, Dixie Heights, Loveland, Colerain, and Sycamore.

The guiding force behind the mural project is renowned artist and behavioral health specialist Brent Billingsley. Brent worked for three weeks with Madeira's HOPE Squad – a school-based, peer to peer suicide prevention program – and art students. Together they discussed themes to incorporate in their three planned murals, one to hang at each of Madeira's schools. MHS art teacher Jill Dulgeroff explained the final concept, "Our mission was to connect all three buildings in our unique school district with a common theme. We used the ideas of Hope, Strength, and Community and incorporated the use of a tree as our symbolism to guide you through a visual story."

Madeira Elementary School's mural shows a child with a seedling to be planted and a large shamrock in honor of the sudden 2023 passing of the school's beloved principal Chris Flanagan. Madeira Middle School's mural shows students with the seedling grown into a sapling, and Madeira High School's depicts students around a full-grown tree.

After Billingsley sketched the design areas in pencil on canvas and labeled them with letters, he brought the mural sections back for the students to paint ala paint by number. For four days the stage in MHS' Medert Auditorium was bustling with students painting mural sections, Broadway show tunes playing, and each of the high school's students coming and going to silkscreen uplifting messages on a custom t-shirt each student made.

Once the murals were complete a school wide assembly was held – complete with the school's band and Reds mascots. The students all wore their self-designed t-shirts as the murals were unveiled and dedicated to each building. Billingsley addressed the full auditorium and said, "PNC Bank and the Reds don't send us to school to create murals, PNC Bank and the Reds send us to schools to build relationships."

Explaining the impact the week long process had on all who experienced it, MHS senior Kennedy Cunningham said, "Murals with a Mission was a unifying experience for the Madeira High School student body. It has been a one of a kind experience and amazing way to end my senior year!"

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MHS junior Kate Manzi and art teacher Jill Dulgeroff



Cindy Lu working on the elementary school mural



Brent Billingsley putting the final touches on a mural



The finished murals unveiled at the dedication ceremony