Community members and artists celebrated completion of phase two of the “Multicultural Mural” at the Moab Valley Multicultural Center (MVMC) on June 16, with a toast and a tour of the completed paintings. In the future, representatives say the mural project, which depicts nine peaceful change leaders, will include interpretive signs and an audio tour in several languages.

MVMC Director Rhiana Medina said the leaders depicted in the mural — Harvey Milk, Eleanor Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou, Standing Bear, Jane Goodall, Malala Yousafzai, Mahatma Gandhi and Cesar Chavez — were chosen because they reflect the values of the center.

“There’s a need for having a visual representation of our values — compassion, collaboration, respect and celebration,” Medina said. “When you put all these people, who are champions of these great causes, I hope it sends a message that ‘this is a place that’s inclusive, this is a place that celebrates diversity, and this is a place that respects non-violent, peaceful change leaders in the community.’”

Medina took the group through a walking tour of the mural, giving a brief biography of the leaders and thanking the local artists who lent their talents to paint the images. She said nine artists — Serah Mead, Peter Apicella, Sarah Stock, Jon Gottschalk, Nara Bopp, Sara Amarie, Dailey Haren, Alina Murdock and Margie Lopez Read — made the project happen.

Amarie, who painted the change leader Maya Angelou, spent a significant amount of time researching the late author before she created her portrait.

“I just love her quotes. She’s very inspirational with women’s rights,” Amarie said. “… It was fun to just [try to feel] maybe what she would have wanted on the mural. I did some
research on her, [and] I read as much as I could about her life and her work. A lot of my art is intuitive, so I connected with what I was reading and with her. And that's what came out.”

Project leader Katlyn Keane said several funding sources were used to make the mural a reality, including a WabiSabi “Make A Difference” grant, and sponsorship by Mike Newman Painting and the Utah Families Foundation.

In addition to establishing set hours for the public to view the mural at the center, located at 156 North 100 West, Keane said MVMC plans to create an audio tour in several languages.

“We want signage to invite people to come on the property and to establish some public hours of the mural and the property in general. And we definitely want an audio tour that people can access from their smart phones that describes the different people and their different accomplishments,” Keane said. “We have a lot of ideas for phase three and we welcome, as always, any input from the community.”

Gabriel Woytek, a longtime volunteer at MVMC, built the frame for the mural last fall. He described the project as a visual celebration of the center and its role in the Moab community.

“It’s promoting the visibility of the center and further putting their mission and vision out there for everyone to see,” Woytek said. “I think it’s a really nice expression of how proud they are to be here and do what they do in this community.”

Already, Medina said, community members across generations are learning about the mural on a daily basis.

“We’ve had a couple field trips. That was really fun and inspiring. I love when kids get to learn for the first time about who somebody is,” Medina said. “And older people have shared stories [like] ‘when I was little my mom wouldn’t let us buy grapes because the farm workers were on strike.’ It has been cool to show it to people of different generations because they have different reasons to be connected to it.”

ByBy Molly Marcello

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