

Rock Solid Team Gaining Momentum

It was 11 am, Sept. 14. Panic was setting in for the Rock Solid crew; the unveiling of the new gallery was less than 9 hours away. The electricians, who had graciously volunteered more than a week of labour, had already logged 4 hours on this sunny Saturday morning.

Back at the Rock Solid factory, exhausted decal applicators learned one of the recognition panels had to be completely redone. At the tracks, graffiti artists began to arrive to start the

afternoon's urban art demonstration. Wading through a sea of wires, ladders, and tools, the urban artists worked their magic with spray cans. This was the launch of the Traskside Art Gallery (TAG)—the culmination of months of preparation by the Rock Solid youth crew.

Despite the enormous pressure felt as the unveiling hour rapidly neared, the event progressed beautifully. At 8 pm, the crew took great pleasure in pulling the tarps off the 16 much-anticipated billboards. The large crowd excitedly applauded the new addition to their community. The murals—the work of 11 young artists and five professional artists—have transformed the track area into a safer, more welcoming greenspace. What used to be a haven for criminal activity and an ugly eyesore is now the world's largest outdoor youth-art gallery.

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The Rock Solid crew, composed of 16- to 23-year-olds, has gained valuable skills and experience via the creation of the gallery. The crew was hired with the goal of preparing them for the workforce. Human Resources Development Canada funded the project. Through tasks that challenge them to work independently, or co-operatively as a team, these youth are developing confidence, motivation, and initiative. For example, through the responsibilities of running the factory, they are beginning to exhibit a sense of pride in their achievements. The crew is currently making plans for phase two of TAG.

The Public Utility Box (PUB) project is providing the crew with exciting new challenges. They scan artwork into the computer, then colour-correct and manipulate the images onscreen. The perfected artwork is printed as decals, which the





crew carefully applies to local mailboxes. A graffiti-proof laminate on the decals' surface facilitates the easy removal of aerosol vandalism. Canada Post has expressed interest in having this process applied to mailboxes throughout Canada. Soon the crew will be applying decals to other outdoor furniture, such as utility boxes.

With continued support and sponsorship, projects such as TAG and PUB will continue as positive projects for the community—and more important, for the youth.

Through these forms of experiences, crew members are beginning to realize

that obstacles can be overcome—and that they can turn ideas into realities.

The Trackside Art Gallery is a celebration of many successes and an inspiration for all youth. While many people have helped with the projects, special thanks are due a wonderful group of women that represent Zonta International. Among these individuals is Victoria Notary Leta Best. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be more visible in the community.

Without your efforts, we would not be where we are today. ▲

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