

https://www.wdrb.com/news/vibrant-new-mural-spotlights-untold-history-significant-contributions-of-local-women/article_cf463eb6-0156-11ec-a655-376b6127f98b.html

Vibrant new mural spotlights untold history, significant contributions of local women

Sara Sidery
Aug 19, 2021



A vibrant mural in southern Indiana is now bringing some untold history of several important women to life. (WDRB photo)

SALEM, Ind. (WDRB) -- You may have never heard their names, but a vibrant mural in southern Indiana is now bringing some untold history of several important women to life.

The mural, located at 108 South High St. in downtown Salem, tells the story of six women who were pioneers in Washington County and across Kentuckiana.

With every brush stroke and bright color, Rafael Blanco is painting part of Salem's story.

"When I'm painting murals, I want to make a loud statement," said Blanco, a Chicago-based muralist. "I wanted (the faces on the mural) to be like the Titans, like someone that the new generation is going to look up to. Many people don't know about them yet, but they will."

Judy Johnson, executive director of the Washington County Community Foundation, is helping tell some of their stories.

"They were pioneers. They were groundbreakers," Johnson said. "Six women who made an impact on all of us."

All of these women claimed Salem as their hometown, and are featured on the mural from right to left:

- Emma Christy-Baker was one of the first female police officers hired in Indianapolis, paving the way for other women to become detectives.
- UK women's basketball coaching legend Terry Hall, who was once the winningest head coach in UK program history.
- Sarah Parke Morrison petitioned to be the first woman admitted to Indiana University, and became the first woman to graduate.
- Bradie Shrum started the Girl Scouts in Salem. She taught for over 50 years and came out of retirement during WWII to teach during a shortage.
- Dese Rudder was the first licensed pharmacist in the state of Indiana. Her pharmacy, Salem Apothecary, is still open 140 years later.
- Dr. Granny Reid-Lusk, who got a medical license without ever going to school. In the early 1800s, she helped to heal local families and those traveling on the Underground Railroad.

"Every community has these stories. If we look back in history, there are women who have made a difference and made a mark all over our country," said Johnson. "And you, me, all of us are standing on their shoulders."

Blanco hopes his work gives the community some new faces to — quite literally — look up to.

"They are proud of them, and that they are proud of being from Salem," he said.

The site of the mural will eventually be transformed into a mini park with green space, patio tables, umbrellas and florals for a community gathering space.

Copyright 2021 WDRB Media. All Rights Reserved.

Sara Sidery

Reporter