

Connecting Artist with Community Art Opportunities

Aryanna Lounds knew she was an artist when certain assignments in school resounded with her. As a student at Freedman Elementary, the class was asked to read a book and draw what they visualized. And on the first day of English class at Van Sickle Middle School, they were asked to draw out an entire comic panel based on one descriptive word that was given to them.

Because of her interest in art, she chose to go to Putnam Vocational and chose graphics as her major. "I took graphics because I could get a different perspective; people confuse that with visual arts." She goes on to describe that with graphics there is more job availability through skills such as silk screening and logo design. "There was an art club in school....we had a competition, whoever [filled in the most sketchbooks by the end of the year] won the biggest sketchbook." Lounds won the competition. "I still haven't drawn on that sketchbook yet."



Lounds went to American International College (AIC) for one year, majored in graphic design, and is currently taking time off before going back to school. In the meantime, the Resident Engagement Team at Home City has connected her to a couple of opportunities in the local arts community.



Beginning in the winter of 2018, Home City brought Enchanted Circle Theatre in on a project funded by Community Foundation of Western Mass, to create a large mural painted by Home City residents. In her role as a Home City Youth Leader (a MassHousing sponsored youth leadership employment program), Lounds has worked closely all year with Gabriela Micchia, Teaching Artist with Enchanted Circle, painting extensively along with the other residents. When it was time to hang the mural and guide residents to put their handprints on the mural, Lounds was by Micchia's side helping to orchestrate the entire project.

Most recently, the Resident Engagement Team connected Lounds with nationally recognized mural artist Kim Carlino. Carlino, along with many other notable artists gathered in early June for the First Annual Fresh Paint Springfield Festival. Spearheaded by the Commonwealth Mural Collaborative, Springfield Cultural Partnership, and numerous big-name sponsors, Fresh Paint Springfield joins one of many "annual mural festivals held in dozens of cities across the country....an economic and community-building boon"

(freshpaintspringfield.com).

Lounds was one of Carlino's assistant painters for a mural titled "GeoUtopia," one in a series depicting abstractions of fundamental building blocks of nature, painted in a playful and bold manner. "The project was a geometric mural, different perspectives from different angles...zigzags and loops in different colors," Lounds described. "I painted with a paintbrush, sponge, and roller. Low jobs first, then worked my way to the ladder, and then the lift." This was Lounds' first experience on a mural of this size, and getting on the lift was a first, and a challenge, but she did it anyway. "A lot of people stopped by," Lounds recalled as she described working on the project, "A lot of tourists...a double decker bus."

When asked how these projects have helped her in her long-term trajectory as an artist, Lounds says, "It helps me with painting, improves my skills, how I'm holding the brush. It helps to strengthen my wrists."

What's next for Lounds? "I'm going to get a job and look for more projects like this [that give me] experience and more exposure for my artwork."

