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UNH Child Study Center Celebrates New Mural Sept. 24

Richard Haynes Created "Looking In, Looking Out" In Collaboration With Preschoolers

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UNH Child Study and Development Center

September 17, 2008

DURHAM, N.H. - Renowned Seacoast artist and University of New Hampshire admissions counselor Richard Haynes had some unusual collaborators on "Looking In, Looking Out," the mural he created for UNH's Child Study and Development Center (CSDC). The work, which explores diversity, was conceived and painted with significant input and inspiration from the CSDC's 3- to 6-year-old students.

The eight-foot-square mural, which hangs on the center's building at the edge of the UNH campus, will be dedicated Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2008 at 3:30 p.m. Haynes and his young collaborators and their families will attend, as will Barbara Arrington, dean of the College of Health and Human Services; Wanda Mitchell, UNH vice provost for diversity; and Jackie Cowell, executive director of Early Learning New Hampshire. The brief dedication ceremony will be followed by the CSDC's annual Harvest Festival, a celebration of the children's work in the Center's garden. To attend, please contact Tracy Gagnon at 603-862-2835 or tracy.gagnon@unh.edu.

"We see this mural as a metaphorical window into our community and as a reminder of the changing faces of New Hampshire," says CSDC director John Nimmo.

CSDC teachers Sara West and Harlee Tuttle, who led the project, contacted Haynes after seeing a mural in Devine Hall he created with UNH students on the theme, "What does diversity mean to your generation?" With a curriculum and philosophy that embraces diversity as well as inquiry and child-directed learning, the teachers saw a natural opportunity to commission a work from Haynes and to have the CSDC's older students "apprentice" with him.

"We were interested in exploring how a 5-year-old would talk about diversity," says Nimmo, who is also an associate professor of family studies at UNH. "The project was driven by this belief that kids are very capable and there would be a way for them to engage in this process."

Haynes admits he was not sold on the idea at first. "My immediate thought was, 'how in the world are these kids going to create the hard-edged artwork I like?'" says Haynes. "But I bought into the idea because I was going to get the opportunity to sit down with young minds and literally help them see how to look at others through the art."

Haynes, associate director of admissions for diversity at UNH, worked with a group of CSDC 3-

to 6-year-olds for five sessions over a three-week period. The students apprenticed in his technique, learning color theory and exploring the complementary and contrasting colors that are Haynes's signature. The students visited the mural in Devine Hall and studied Haynes's other work. "The kids were enthralled by him," says Nimmo.

"Once I started having these wonderful conversations with them, I wasn't so concerned about staying in the lines," says Haynes. The children brainstormed on ideas of diversity and similarity in their community, and Haynes, who is black, was a catalyst for these conversations. "Kids notice differences in skin color. They talk about diversity in very natural ways," says Nimmo.

Collaborating with teachers, parents, and UNH students, Haynes worked from a photograph of a group of CSDC children and adults embracing to come up with his final image. His young charges even assisted in painting the mural. The mural reflects the children's conversations on diversity, with the central image ringed by the words "Respect is ... love, peace, gentleness, patience, joy, kindness, self-awareness."

"The children truly understood the words on the mural," says Haynes. "It was a very successful project." Nimmo notes that the mural's impact will endure, initiating conversations about diversity among visitors, UNH students and the community for years to come.

Funding for the project came from a grant from the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance project, as well as from proceeds from the CSDC Color Our World auction.

The Child Study and Development Center will celebrate 80 years of early childhood education at UNH in January 2009. The center is known nationally for its inquiry-based approach to early education and its award-winning Growing a Green Generation Project on gardening with children. As a laboratory school, the CSDC provides a setting for research, educates 100 pre-service teachers, and hosts hundreds of educator tours each year.

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Image of mural available to download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2008/sept/csdc mural.jpg

The 8 x 8' canvas mural "Looking In, Looking Out," by artist Richard Haynes in conjunction with preschool students at UNH's Child Study and Development Center, hangs outside the CSDC's building on the edge of the UNH campus.

