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 [ From Lansing State Journal ]

### Paint-by-number party: Art project encourages kids' leadership skills

Seth Roy  
 Lansing State Journal

Aimee Barajas carefully painted a red house on the mural - her contribution to her classmates' ode to community.

Barajas, 13, a seventh-grader at Pattengill Middle School, helped create a paint-by-number mural at Potter Park Zoo as part of the ART of Leadership Foundation (ALF).

"We do a giant project every year," she said this week.

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(Photo by Rod sanford/Lansing State Journal)  
 Working together: Pearl Hernandez (right), 11, and other youngsters and adults work together Thursday painting a mural during a paint-by-number party at Potter Park Zoo for the ART of Leadership program. At top, a house takes shape on the mural as Aimee Barajas adds her contribution to the community project.

Photo Gallery:

Paint by numbers

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<a href="#">Food &amp; Drink</a>	The idea behind this year's project revolved around community.
<a href="#">Health &amp; Fitness</a>	
<a href="#">Home &amp; Garden</a>	Jennifer Everhart, course leader for Lansing ALF, said the group, composed of sixth- through eighth-graders at Pattengill, came up with the idea for the mural after creating a community-themed collage. This mural is the group's community service project.
<a href="#">Worship Directory</a>	
<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	
<a href="#">Arts</a>	"It's limited only by their imagination," she said.
<a href="#">Boredom Busters</a>	
<a href="#">Comics</a>	
<a href="#">Dining</a>	The group doesn't know where the mural will end up, but Everhart said it would probably be in a community park or center, or at Pattengill.
<a href="#">Escapes</a>	
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<a href="#">Movies</a>	The yearlong program is designed to help inner-city children develop leadership skills.
<a href="#">TV Listings</a>	
<a href="#">Music</a>	Everhart said that is taken into account when students interview for the group.
<a href="#">People</a>	
<b>COMMUNITIES</b>	"(We) try to gauge their leadership capacity," Everhart said.
<a href="#">Bath</a>	
<a href="#">Charlotte</a>	ALF has been at Pattengill for three years and will follow the current eighth grade students into high school. There are also programs in Detroit and Kalamazoo.
<a href="#">Delta-Waverly</a>	
<a href="#">DeWitt</a>	Sixth-grader Devin Torka, 12, said the program has helped him with public speaking.
<a href="#">East Lansing</a>	
<a href="#">Eaton Rapids</a>	"I have made a good improvement," he said. "Not being shy, talking in front of crowds."
<a href="#">Grand Ledge</a>	
<a href="#">Haslett</a>	
<a href="#">Holt</a>	ALF is led by a number of volunteer coaches who are members of the surrounding communities.
<a href="#">Lansing</a>	
<a href="#">Mason</a>	ALF coach William Doxie, 39, of Holt, said he wishes he'd had a similar program available when he was younger.
<a href="#">Okemos</a>	
<a href="#">Portland</a>	"I'm a firm believer in mentoring," said Doxie. "Anything I can pass onto them to help them avoid potholes - it's been very rewarding."
<a href="#">St. Johns</a>	
<a href="#">Williamston</a>	Everhart has similar reasons for getting involved in the program.
<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>	
<a href="#">Contact Us</a>	"I see the difference it's making in kids' lives," she said.

"It's just invaluable to see the growth in their leadership

skills."

At the Paint-By-Number Party on Wednesday, students and coaches in the program collaborated with the community to paint the mural, paint faces, participate in sack races and eat.

"We wanted to bring our community and our families together," said sixth-grader Pearl Hernandez, 11. "My favorite thing about it (the program) was getting to know people and getting to do stuff like this."

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