

Collier Township Parks and Recreation CASE STUDY Collier Deters Vandalism with Mural



“I felt such an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment after I signed my name. I have invested 50 hours in painting and I could not believe that this entire work standing massively before me was designed and painted by me. I love my mural and I am so proud of what I did for the community.”

—Emily Docherty

Background:

Faced with an increasing amount of vandalism in the parks and playgrounds, Collier Township officials wondered what they could do in their new neighbourhood park to prevent such actions. After inheriting a parcel of land with a block storage facility on it from the US Army, the township decided to convert the land into two multi-purpose athletic fields, and the building was converted into a concession stand with restrooms and storage.

Rationale:

Township officials felt certain that the large face of the building would be a prime target for graffiti artists. Perhaps, they thought, having a young local artist paint a mural there, would deter others from de-facing it. Township Supervisor Tim Young and Parks and

Recreation Director Lisa Novak asked the High School Art Teacher if he had a student capable of painting a mural on the building situated in Kelly Park. They thought it could serve two purposes: 1) Provide a local student with a worthwhile senior project and 2) Help beautify one of their parks while deterring vandalism. He suggested young artist Emily Docherty.

Her rationale behind this mural was to design a piece that not only advanced her art skills but also painted a vivid image of how Collier is represented as a community. Each picture of the mural represents a different area of Collier Township. The cabin is a replica of the Walker-Ewing Cabin, which depicts the historical side of Collier, the two bicyclists portray the Walker's Mill Panhandle Trail, the hibiscus flowers signify Settler's Ridge and the Botanical Gardens, the geese represent Rennerdale's Duck Pond, the dog symbolizes the family atmosphere of Collier and the majestic flag flowing behind all the images illustrates how Flag Day was founded by a Collier Township resident, William Kerr. As all the images are connected into one meaning, we can form the "Big Picture" which is the nationalism and Americanism that brings together all areas of Collier Township.

Resources Required:

Emily sketched this idea and presented it to the Parks and Recreation Board. After a few minor changes to the original design, Emily began obtaining all the materials and organizing a schedule to paint the mural. The Township provided all the resources needed. A total of \$294.00 in paint products were purchased and used to complete the mural, which took around 50 hours!

Process and Challenges Overcome:

There were some obstacles that had to be dealt with. One, was the height of the building. Emily would not be able to complete this massive work from the ground. So the Township purchased scaffolding for her to use. This presented yet another issue—Emily's safety. Township officials required that an adult be present to assist her with using the scaffolding to ensure her safety. The second obstacle was time. Although Emily started this project in the summer, between her summer job, and the other family obligations, she was not able to complete work over the summer months. Once she went back to school in the fall, her available time to paint was even shorter, confined by after-school hours and shorter days. Add to that, colder and sometimes rainy days, at times we wondered if she would ever finish!

Director Novak communicated with Emily on a regular basis, too offer encouragement and urge her to push through these minor obstacles in order to reach her final goal. In the end, it was worth the wait, as Emily's mural depicted "What Collier Means to Me" through her own eyes. A dedication ceremony was held on October 5th, 2013. "I felt such an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment after I signed my name. I have invested 50 hours in painting and I could not believe that this entire work standing massively before me was designed and painted by me. I love my mural and I am so proud of what I did for the community"—Emily Docherty.

