



# Evanston Mural Arts Program continues to bring art to Evanston streets

**Hannah Webster, Assistant City Editor**

When Lea Pinsky and Dustin Harris moved back to Evanston from Chicago in 2012, they were eager to spread public art in their hometown.

The married couple had been painting murals together in Chicago since 2005 and were hired to paint two murals in Evanston in 2016.

Pinsky said positive reactions from the community inspired the creation of a formal mural program for the city.

“People were really excited about seeing this art come to be, how much it uplifted the neighborhood,” she said. “And that affirmed for us how great it would be to bring other artists to Evanston.”

A year later, Pinsky and Harris launched the Evanston Mural Arts Program, housed under local nonprofit Art Encounter.

Since its inception, the program has consistently produced three to five murals each year and partnered with many organizations within the community, including the Evanston Chamber of Commerce and Evanston/Skokie District 65.

“We’ve gotten murals in every single ward in Evanston,” she said. “That continues to be really important — to make sure that the murals aren’t just centralized around downtown.”

The program has also expanded to provide walking mural tours and an online map highlighting mural locations.

Andy Vick, executive director of Downtown Evanston, said it has been wonderful working with the Mural Arts Program because “they really know what they’re doing.”

“We can basically provide funding and input and really turn the process over to them because they know how to make it work from start to finish,” Vick said.



Photo Courtesy of Lea Pinsky

Since 2017, the Evanston Mural Arts Program has facilitated several public art projects each year.

Downtown Evanston has partnered with EMAP to produce public art pieces in the downtown area, such as “Time to Breathe,” a mural painted by artist Max Sansing at the Davis Street Metra underpass in 2022.

This year, Sansing will extend the mural to Church Street, Pinsky said.

The organization also plans to collaborate this year with Meals on Wheels, a nonprofit that delivers meals to older people and people with disabilities.

Deborah Mack, executive director of Meals on Wheels Northeastern Illinois, said that since moving into its new food production facility three years ago, the nonprofit has been doing clean-up work and considered outsourcing a mural to make the facility look a bit nicer.

“That west wall was just sort of a blank canvas that I thought might lend itself well to a mural,” Mack said. “And I had this vision of doing something that would recognize the founders of our organization.”

Damon Lamar Reed, a portrait artist who has worked with the Mural Arts Program previously, will paint the mural.

The organization also plans to work with local artists Sholo Beverly and Emma Moss to produce a mural celebrating women’s history in Evanston in collaboration with the Evanston History Center and Shorefront Legacy Center, Pinsky and Harris said.

Evanston pop artist Jordan Nickel — who goes by POSE — will paint the Mural Arts Program’s fourth mural this year on Noyes Street. Harris said he’s excited to have Nickel on board.

The organization hopes to expand its network of community partners and connect with younger artists in the future, Pinsky and Harris said. Pinsky added that they especially hope to engage with the Northwestern community.

She said the program is “community responsive,” catering to requests from businesses and organizations around Evanston, rather than searching for locations for murals independently.

“We want to serve the communities,” Pinsky said. “So we’re looking for partners that we can work with to help them achieve their goals while we have our own goals of beautifying Evanston.”

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