

# Murals Capture Our Attention

When Lynch's Landing began our Mural Arts Program in June, 2001 our goal was to create high-quality public art that increases visitor and tourism activity



Downtown in an effort to support our local businesses. We also wanted to make Downtown a great place to spend time for the people who live here. The first project was a historic-themed window

mural painted by Michelle Spruce and Mark Snowden on the old James T. Davis building on Main Street next to the Community Market.

Over the next several years time was spent talking with building owners and donors about possible wall murals. A great deal of discussion went into finding a building owner who wanted a mural and finding private donors to provide the funding and finally coming to an agreement about the mural content. Our commitment was to create respectful public art of the highest quality.

Earlier this year, we were able to gain support for our first wall mural. Robin Cheek of Farmer's Seed and Supply agreed to have a historic mural reflecting three little boys running through a corn field on their way to fish in the James River. It is a wonderfully innocent depiction of children at play and is the first thing you see as you exit off of Highway 29 and enter Downtown on Main Street. The little boys featured in this mural are none other than Gideon Cheek and his friends Aonghas and Euan Morrison along with their family pets.

At the same time we were working out the details of the Farmer's Seed and Supply building, we were notified of the possibility of placing a mural on the Lynchburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority building located on Commerce Street. The board of the Housing Authority granted permission pending approval of the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond. The recent renovation of the building utilizing historic tax credits required special authorization from this state organization who oversees tax credits. Rachel Flynn and Tracy Shaw worked to gain authorization.

Although both murals were funded from private donations, plans for the murals were reviewed with City Council. With a thumbs-up from all stakeholders, the walls became a muralist's palette. After only three weeks of work on the murals, Mike Cooper of Murals & More came down from his scaffolding and the walls had been transformed.

The murals would not have been possible without support from many people and organizations. Our grateful appreciation goes to Robin Cheek, Ed McCann and the board of Lynchburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority, Holiday Inn Select, Randy Nelson, Margaret Nelson, Herschel Keller, SparkleWash of Central Virginia, N.B. Handy employees, Genworth employees, Gary Case & Company, Inc., Rachel Flynn, Tracy Shaw, the Department of Historic Resources, and finally, the donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Our eyes are now scanning the Downtown horizon for the site of the next mural to be completed in 2005. On your next visit Downtown, be sure to look for our newest artistic attractions.

## Hands of Service

By Terri Proffitt

As the sun sets on Downtown each day and the streetlights come on to light the way home, an interesting phenomenon captures the attention of workers as they pass by the old Jobbing House building on Commerce Street. Heads swivel and cars seem to have a mind of their own as they pull into a parking lot next to the building. A mural stretching 30 feet high and 50 feet wide now graces the side of the Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority office.

Called the Hands of Service mural, the hands glow during sunny days but take on a whole new depth in the early evening. Life experiences seem to show through in the fragile bone structure. Hands telling the life stories of comfort given, nourishment prepared, and babies held. Hands that have served others. Untold stories of kindness that may never be known.

The hands in the mural are not images from a painter's imagination. The hands you see are real, painted from a photograph of citizens who gathered one summer



morning at the historic Joseph Nichols Tavern building on 5th Street to have their hands photographed and recreated on a larger than life canvas in memory of their friend Reverend Bev

Cosby. As the participants gathered sharing easy laughter and a common history of community service, they were asked to meet in the center of the room with all hands on the table in a symbolic gesture of working together. Then with the click of a camera shutter, the hands were photographed and a historic moment in time was captured on film. Friends, supporters, and benefactors of Bev Cosby gathering to honor his memory and his service to the community. There are those in the room who wish to remain anonymous, preferring instead for the attention to be on the mural and the community servant it honors. And then there are the hands of children who are part of a City and community that understands it takes volunteers helping each other to bring out the best in all of us.

As is so often the case when remembering folks who have passed away, wishes and what ifs enter our minds. What if we could have photographed Bev's hands serving others? That opportunity was lost with his passing, but the mural serves as a daily reminder that much of the good that is accomplished in this community is done by volunteers and public servants. Is the mural historic? Yes. You never know when what you are doing today is actually making history for future generations. Go visit the mural and look carefully at the hand on the bottom left corner. Reverend Haywood Robinson was in the room that day talking and laughing with us. History was photographed, even if we didn't realize it at the time.