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Contact: Betsy Hnath, 757-513-7550, ehnath@odu.edu

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY AND NEON DISTRICT INVITE PUBLIC TO HELP WITH NEW MURAL PROJECT ON FEB. 20

Citizens are asked to help the “paint-by-number” process that will create panels for a large artwork that will be permanently installed on the exterior wall of the CHKD Thrift Store in Norfolk

NORFOLK, Va. – (February 14, 2019) – Community members are invited help in a large-scale art project spearheaded by Old Dominion University’s Department of Art and the NEON District for the Young Terrace neighborhood in Norfolk. The first public painting sessions will be held at the Young Terrace Community Center from 2-4 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20. The center is located at 804 Whitaker Lane in Norfolk.

Teens and adults are welcome to assist in the “paint-by-number” process for 63 5x5-foot panels that were designed by ODU students with community input. The 1,500-square-foot mural, which will be on the exterior wall of the CHKD Thrift Store at 795 Monticello Ave. in Norfolk’s NEON District, is designed to represent community unity and celebrate the neighborhood youths.

“The studio will be a lively community-gathering place where people of a diverse range of ability, race, age, economic status and life experience will come together to build and strengthen community relationships

through artistic processes,” said Natalia Pilato, director of art education at ODU, who is leading the project that’s called *Neighborhood Markers*. “It gives everyone a chance to have their voices heard in the art they see every day. The community is our client in this project.”

Pilato’s previous community art murals have measured up to 3,000 square feet and included more than 500 participants ranging in age from 4 to 88.

ODU art education, visual arts and humanities students began *Neighborhood Markers* in January by surveying community members within a half-mile radius of the mural site, seeking input for design content and concepts. The students also worked with K-2 children at P.B. Young Elementary School to incorporate art from the children featuring “sky, sea, transportation and home.”

The ODU students created designs for the mural based on that input and their own elements. They traced the designs onto 5x5-foot fabric panels. Starting with the Feb. 20 painting sessions, those panels will become part of a large grid that will be used to create the permanent art to be installed the last week of April.

By involving the community at every stage, Pilato said the projects create “vibrancy and ownership.”

“They have pride in their contributions and in their community because they see themselves in the work,” she said. “And they have a story to tell because the mural ends up being a narrative of the community.”

Pilato said the Old Dominion students benefit equally from the experience.

“It’s hands-on service learning,” she said. “In this project, the students are offering something to the community, but the community is learning and participating, too. And these students know when they leave me that they can do this type of project anywhere in the world.”

Rachel McCall, special projects manager for the Downtown Norfolk Council, said that partnering with Old Dominion University fulfills a longtime goal for the NEON District.

“The community outreach being done by ODU art students is essential in sharing the creative opportunities that exist in the NEON District,” McCall said. “In particular, we’ve long wanted to create a mural that directly reflects, welcomes and engages with the St. Paul’s communities right across the street from the district. It’s so vital that Norfolk’s arts district is a place where everyone can participate in the arts.”

Other partners in *Neighborhood Markers* include:

Downtown Norfolk Council
PB Young Elementary School
Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Young Terrace Community Center
Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters

For more information on *Neighborhood Markers*, please follow along:

<http://neighborhoodmarkers.com/index.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/neighborhoodmarkers/>
https://www.instagram.com/neighborhood_markers/?hl=en

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About Old Dominion University

Old Dominion University is Virginia's entrepreneurial-minded doctoral research university with more than 24,200 students, rigorous academics, an energetic residential community and initiatives that contribute \$2.6 million annual to the Commonwealth's economy.

About NEON

Norfolk's first official arts district, NEON (New Energy of Norfolk), is home to longtime cultural institutions like the Chrysler Museum of Art and Harrison Opera House as well as studio-based ventures like d'Art Center and the Rutter Family Art Foundation, all providing artists a place to make, create and show. Within a few short blocks you can see a muralist at work, take in an improv comedy performance at Push Comedy Theater, watch a live glass-working demonstration, shop for unique home goods, get a tattoo or dine out at an eclectic restaurant. Learn more at www.NEONNFK.com and follow along on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at @neonnfk.