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JOSH KUCKENS / STAFF PHOTO

Mark Browning secures one of 47 panels making up the new mural on Summer Street in Barre on Saturday. The mural was the result of a city-wide collaborative effort from local organizations including the Barre Rotary Club, The Paletteers of Vermont and the Vermont Granite Museum.

Summer Street mural installed

By STEPHEN MILLS
STAFF WRITER

BARRE — A colorful tribute to all things Barre and Vermont came to life with the installation of the Summer Street Mural Project on Saturday.

The 130-foot by 20-foot mural is made up of 47 panels. The project began with a proposal by former Barre Rotary Club president Caroline Earle two years ago. The project involved trying to find an artist to design the mural and finding people to paint the panels. As the project progressed, other local nonprofits and businesses got involved.

There was much to celebrate Saturday as participants in the project gathered to watch the panels be installed on a wooden frame attached to the large retaining wall at the south end of Summer Street. Observers were treated to grilled hot dogs and refreshments, and shared stories about the mural project.

"I proposed it to the Barre Rotary Club as a project to really continue to beautify Summer Street. With the new Downstreet building and other things happening in Barre, this seemed like something that really needed attention," Earle said.

Earle said the Rotarians first tried to get a Spaulding High School art teacher to design the mural but were told they couldn't commit to the project. Instead, the Rotarians

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found Kristine Chartrand, an art teacher at U-32 Middle and High School.

"She's an artist, and she designed it but it's her first large public art project," Earle said.

Earle said a committee was formed early on, with Sue Higby, executive director of Studio Place Arts, and others offering artistic advice. Eventually, the Paletteers of Vermont, led by Paletteers Vice President John Landy, were asked to assist in the painting of the panels, using 10 gallons of house paint from Nelson's Ace Hardware in Barre.

Painting of the panels took place indoors last winter, thanks to the generosity of the Vermont Granite Museum. And Mark Browning, of Stone and Browning Property Management in Barre, was on hand Saturday with a mobile aerial platform to raise and install the higher panels.

As a precaution, the mural is coated with an expensive clear resin that should help resist any graffiti that can be pressure-washed off. National Life and another donor contributed $500 each towards the $1,400 cost of the resin coating.

Seven paletteers — President Linda Kiniry, Landy, Clara Geist, Jan Avery, John Weaver, Emily Rappold and Pam Murphy — handled most of the painting, though Landy said more than 50 people participated.

"It's been a really amazing collaboration, between the Rotary Club, the Paletteers and the Vermont Granite Museum," Landy said. "It's just amazing to see this finally going up on the wall."

Barre Mayor Lucas Herring was also present to observe and lend a hand.

"The city helped out because it's our infrastructure and the wall that this mural is on, but it's really the clubs that are doing the work to make beautification happen in Barre," Herring said.

Earle said the project group turned to the Vermont Historical Society and the Vermont Granite Museum to suggest ideas for iconic, historic and landmark subjects to include in the mural.

The mural celebrates all four seasons, the state's fall foliage and ski industry, the maple industry and its abundant wildlife, including moose and bear, and there's also a tribute to the Morgan horse. There's a strong showing for Barre's granite industry, with the figures of famous downtown statues — Youth Triumphant and The Italian-American Stone Cutter — and a mausoleum from Hope Cemetery, Chris Miller's giant zipper beside Studio Place Arts and a diesel locomotive hauling stone from the granite quarries.

Other famous landmarks in the state include the State House dome and statue, loons on Lake Champlain, the Ticonderoga steam ship at the Shelburne Museum and a covered bridge.

Chartrand's colorful 13-foot-long scale-model painting was turned into slides that were projected onto wooden panels and traced by Paletteers before being painted.

Chartrand was present at the installation with her husband, Michael, daughter Hattie, aged 3, and the couple's three-week-old baby, Theo.

"It's amazing and its awesome to see the hard work that everyone's put into it. It took a lot of people to make this happen," Chartrand said.

Barre Rotary Club President Liane Martinelli added: "This is a great shining moment for our community. I'm excited for everyone to look at it and enjoy it. We've already had some interest in us possibly doing the same thing with other walls in Barre, so there may be more projects to come. One thing leads to another."

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