



## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### Whittier High Students Revitalize Campus Tunnel with Historical Mural Project

**WHITTIER** – A crowd of Whittier High School art students and their families erupted in cheers on Aug. 5 as they unveiled murals depicting the history of the community and school, a montage of vivid images that celebrate civil rights advocacy, football heroes, Vietnam War protests, technology advances and the school's iconic Cardinal mascot.

The Centennial Cardinals Mural Project displays 17 murals, each five feet by five feet, in an 80-foot tunnel that connects two parts of the Whittier High campus. Each mural represents a decade in the community's history; most are complete, but some will be wrapped up in coming weeks.

Students pored through archives underneath the Whittier High School Library and at the Whittier Museum to research decades from 1900 to the current day, with the best designs from more than 30 students chosen.

"We are so proud of our students and their commitment to showcasing their artistic abilities through this mural project. Special thanks go to our former principal, Lori Eshilian, who really helped get this project off the ground and saw it through all the way to the end," Principal Tim Liggett said. "I'm so excited that these young artists got to learn about the history of Whittier High School, and thanks to their hard work and the support from the school and community, they are now part of the history of Whittier High School."

The murals are a collaborative effort of the Whittier community, with local artists mentoring teenagers and elementary school students helping paint under the direction of high schoolers. The Whittier Cultural Arts Foundation donated \$2,000 to fund the project.

The project's mastermind is Whittier High alumna Adriana Vigil, the founder of TEENS INSPIRE KIDS, an initiative that encourages teenage artists to teach young children about art.

"Young kids really look up to teenagers; I think there is something there where both groups can really grow by working with each other," Vigil said. "Creating public art also provides students with an incredible opportunity to showcase their creativity and hard work."

Yoshio Nakamura, a renowned local arts educator, signed his name to one of the murals that replicated a portion of a mural he painted on the inside of Whittier High School's library in 1956. He was pleased to see the next generation of artists showcasing their work.

“It’s a tremendous idea and I give Adriana credit for even thinking of this,” Nakamura said at the unveiling. “It turned out great. I think this is a great addition to the high school.”

Sophomore Aurora Escobar’s mural focused on the 1960s, highlighting a military helicopter to represent the Vietnam War and the high school’s float winning second place in the Rose Parade. She was thrilled to see people smiling as they walked by her painting.

“It’s a great feeling because you don’t know what is in people’s minds when they’re looking at your painting,” she said.

**PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**WHSMURAL1:** Whittier High School student artists celebrate the Centennial Cardinals Mural Project’s unveiling on Aug. 5 with Whittier Union High School District Superintendent Martin Plourde and Adriana Vigil, far right, of TEENS INSPIRE KIDS.

**WHSMURAL2:** Yoshio Nakamura, a retired art teacher from Whittier High, signs his name to one of the murals in the campus tunnel.

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