



AZUSA

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nov. 9, 2015

CONTACT: Valerie Martinez

Maritza Fairfield
(909) 445-1001

School Mural Project Brings Art, American History to Life at Azusa Elementary School

Valleydale Elementary School students are observing American history unfold in front of their eyes as Azusa Pacific University (APU) art students design and paint a multi-color mural in their main school corridor. The project, which will likely be completed in early December, brings to life three notable figures from Colonial America – Abigail Adams, Benjamin Banneker and Noah Webster.

The mural project, overseen by APU Professor of Art and Design Dr. Jim Thompson, is one component of a Service Learning partnership between Azusa Unified School District and Azusa Pacific's Center for Academic Service-Learning and Research. College students visit the AUSD campus Mondays and Wednesdays.

"AUSD's partnership with Azusa Pacific's Service Learning Center has reciprocal benefits for the District, the university and the Azusa community," AUSD Superintendent Dr. Linda Kaminski said. "The APU students come to our campuses and acquire real-life experience, while our students gain extra-curricular guidance that complements the high-quality instruction they receive every day."

Valleydale principal Leslie Ford approached Dr. Thompson – who has conducted on-campus art workshops with Valleydale students in the past – with the idea of a student-conceived mural project so Valleydale students could see the artistic process firsthand.

"We want our kids to understand that art does not just appear as a finished product, but that it takes much work, preparation and patience to complete an installation of this magnitude," Ford said. "Additionally, they will learn American history and benefit from the aesthetics of a brilliantly-rendered mural that will be with Valleydale Elementary for years to come."

The six APU art and graphics design majors Thompson brings to Valleydale – seniors Ellen Appleby, Marian Nutley, Corrine Low, Mikaela Milner, Khang Tiet and junior Jamie Kwok – came up with the

mural design format after consulting with Valleydale faculty and staff, opting to depict short pictorial biographies of three American historical figures who could serve as inspirations for Valleydale students.

Adams, the wife of President and Founding Father John Adams, was an early advocate of women's rights; Banneker was a pioneering African-American surveyor and writer; and Webster, who published the first American dictionary, dedicated his life to helping shape the English language. Their portraits will be accompanied by text describing their major accomplishments, as well as symbols of their craft.

"Dr. Thompson has graciously volunteered his services on behalf of Valleydale students for many years, and has established a tremendous rapport," Ford says of Thompson, who will soon retire after 40 years of teaching, the last 25 years at Azusa Pacific. "As a final gift, we wanted an artistic legacy at the school to remember him by. We will be sad to see him go, but wish him all the best in the future."

Azusa Unified has embarked on numerous beautification projects district-wide, with new art, landscaping and classroom facilities providing an aesthetic boost for students and staff, as well as campus visitors.

"We believe that students are more prepared and inspired to learn when they have a beautiful learning environment," AUSD Board of Education President Yolanda Rodriguez-Pena said. "We deeply appreciate the wonderful work being done by Dr. Thompson and his Azusa Pacific students."

PHOTO CAPTION: Azusa Pacific University students are in the process of painting a mural in a corridor of Valleydale Elementary School.

###