

St. Joseph mural serves 2 purposes

Welcoming art also deters graffiti

By Bertrand Teo

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Community leaders hope a new mural commissioned on a 6-foot-high wall at the intersection of Brandeis Avenue and Bradley Street will deter graffiti and help distinguish the St. Joseph neighborhood from Germantown.

For the past 2½ years, the wall has been a popular target for graffiti artists, said Gail Linville, president of the St. Joseph's Area Association. The damage to public property has been a source of complaints from residents, she said.

The mural portraying an old quilt was painted by artist Marjie Ryan, who received \$2,000 for her work from Metro Councilman Jim King.

There is a high frequency of vandalism on the wall because of the prime location, Ryan said.

"Graffiti artists know good exposure and this corner is a unique traffic corner with the ways cut two ways," she said.

Local business owner Antz Yent Wettig, who frequently drives through the intersection of Bradley and Brandeis, counts at least two cases of graffiti a month on the wall.

Most times, vandals leave "tags" on the wall — spray-painted markings usually in the form of personal initials, he said.

"These kids want to call themselves artists but they really are just straight-up vandals," he said.



The mural is at the intersection of Brandeis Avenue and Bradley Street. BERTRAND TEO/THE COURIER-JOURNAL

ONLINE VIDEO

» An online video is at courier-journal.com/central

Wettig said local business owners in the area are fed up with the vandalism. The graffiti on the wall, he said, serves as a constant reminder to businesses that they too are subjected to vandalism.

"When it (vandalism) spills out to private property, that just kills me," he said.

Because St. Joseph is an old neighborhood with many longtime residents and a number of young people — mostly University of Louisville students — Ryan thought of the concept of marrying the two types of residents through the mural's theme of "the fabric of a community," she said.

"I took an old comforter idea to symbolize the coming together of different personalities," she said. "Each of the squares represents a unique personality and this is a utopian view of how people can live side by side."

Ryan said the numer-



Artist Marjie Ryan painted the mural.

ous patches on the wall from the graffiti made painting a quilt a natural fit.

The message of the mural is that by joining forces, a community can become stronger than each scrap could be, Ryan said.

Linville said the mural also serves as a symbolic entrance to the neighborhood and a better way for visitors to distinguish that they are in St. Joseph as opposed to Germantown.

"People can get the 'I am in Germantown' out of their mind," Linville said. "Our hope is to create identity — to define the boundaries — and to welcome."

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