

In 2009-2010, the Fine Arts Booster Group coordinated a large public art project called the *Watershed Wall*. This project was such a massive undertaking that it taught us many lessons, reminiscent of the book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. This is what we learned from public art....

A big idea is worth doing.

Teachers really do know best.

City officials are creative people, too.

When you need help, ask for it and the community will respond.

Children are wise.

Everything is more fun when you collaborate.

Mistakes do happen but solutions are found.

It's O.K. not to be able to imagine it, someone else can.

Seeing something you created makes you proud.

Art reaches everyone.

The *Watershed Wall* is a clay tile mural created by students of the Ithaca City School District as a result of collaboration between the City of Ithaca and the Ithaca City School District (ICSD) art teachers. This project was facilitated by the Fine Arts Booster Group, an affiliate of the Ithaca Public Education Initiative. The fifty-five foot mural was installed on the parking garage wall adjacent to the "Butterfly Alley" near Cinemapolis in downtown Ithaca and has been donated to the City of Ithaca. The mural design represents an aerial view of the creeks feeding Cayuga Lake, our watershed. The clay tiles represent land and the lake rocks represent water, celebrating art and nature. This design was created by district art teachers with inclusive and developmentally appropriate educational goals in mind.

Students from ten schools from all grade levels worked on the clay tiles in their art classes. Each school was assigned a "land mass" or section and students worked collaboratively to make their imprints in clay. Students made their textural impressions using a combination of natural objects and other items that represent their heritage and experiences. The sections were cut into tiles and kiln-fired, stained and fired again. Once a school section was finished, the tiles were brought to a central location, assembled and affixed to panels.

The assembly process engaged community volunteers, some who had never been in our schools, and students led by coordinating artist Annemarie Zwack and coordinating booster volunteer Candace Shoemaker. Belle Sherman Elementary School's art room became the designated assembly center.

The project was unveiled on June 4, 2010 with a ribbon cutting ceremony led by then Major Carol Peterson. Project support came from the Fine Arts Booster Group (FABG), the City of Ithaca Department of Public Works and Public Art Commission, Ithaca City School District art teachers, the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI), IPEI Teacher Grants and FABG mini-grants, the Service League, Tompkins Trust Company, All Stone and Tile Company, Tim Merrick Construction, Cayuga Lumber Company, Annemarie Zwack, the Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom and Trout in the Classroom Projects, the Strebel Community Enrichment Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County and A and B Awards.

This project was undertaken to celebrate children's art and connect their work to our community. Check out the wall this spring, if you find the year 2010 spelled out in rock, email us at president@fabgithaca.org or call 277-4631. Check out pictures and descriptions on our website at www.fabgithaca.org.