

We Are OKA

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SERVING THE LORD AND THE COMMUNITY

Coming Up at OKA

July 29th - Teaching Artist Appreciation Dinner

July 31st - First Person Arts Storytelling Event

August 7th - Breakdance Class Luncheon/Reunion

August 20th - Artist 4 Ayuda Exhibition

September 7th - Youth Art Course Registration

September 11th - United Way Day of Caring in Hunting Park



12 Years of Kindness

55 year old, Gregory Upshaw, has lived in the Hunting Park Community for 12 long years. Upshaw is a retired mental health worker, who now serves the Hunting Park Community by being a Block Captain, mentoring children, helping the elderly, and volunteering at elementary schools in the neighborhood.

Upshaw spoke highly of the OKA House, saying that “it benefits the community as a whole and gives [its] children opportunities to experience things that they might not have experienced anywhere else.” Upshaw described the OKA House as one of a kind; he said, “There aren’t many neighborhoods that have a corner house specifically for children.”

The OKA House has given Upshaw the opportunity to share his own talents, as he is known as “The Community Poet”. He started writing poetry in college and found that it was “easy”. God has obviously given Upshaw that wonderful talent, and he expressed that everyone should fully utilize the talents that God has given them, because just as easily as they were given, they could be taken away. Upshaw’s original poem “Elements of Nature” is to be displayed along the bridge mural.

Upshaw continually stressed the fact that “no man is perfect,” yet he sees himself as a mentor and a person that gives back to the community, unlike the adults that live in the community and don’t help out at all. Upshaw also believes that art has the ability to bring people together for a greater cause; however, everyone must settle their differences in order for art to change things. “Art is a vision, something you can see and listen to in your mind, just as poetry; poetry is like art, except it’s in words. If you put the words in your mind,



ELEMENTS OF NATURE

by Shadow Poet UP (aka Gregory Upshaw)

As I sit looking at the tree I realize the elements in the tree are also the elements in me. Just as the ground parted to give birth to the tree, my mother parted to give birth to me. We both began with a seed and in time of hunger Mother Nature was there to feed. Like the tree, I too have an outer skin and limbs and we both need two things to survive because without air or water, neither one would be alive. But the most fascinating thing is that when I pass I will still be like the tree put into the ground to be born again but this time the elements of nature, may be rearranged whereas I maybe the tree and the tree me.

Finishing What was Started

The projects being worked on at the OKA House are now coming to a close. Natalie Nuñez has finished painting her ceiling mural and has begun to outline the swirls with black Sharpie.

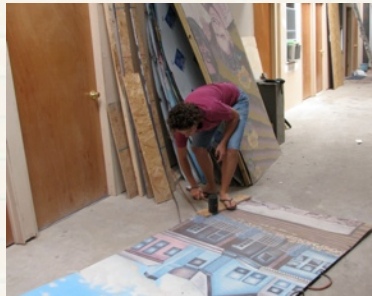
Gustavo Peguero, Brittany Wright-Whitley, Janira Bremner, and Bryn Bergwell have all been working on finishing covering the mesh with tiles for the mosaic. They plan to have most of the tiling down by Friday, so that the finishing touches will be the only thing necessary in making the mosaic come together. The gang has been very excited about the outcome of the mural.

On July 27th, Michaelanne Harriman stayed at the OKA House

late, to figure out what direction the mosaic should go in next. With long hours and much thought, what Harriman came up with was a success. For this project in particular, she has been paying very close attention to texture and detail. She wanted the tiles to be able to represent the different textures in the picture, that is to be portrayed through the mosaic. The attention for detail and texture is so important that simply "after removing two pale colored tiles and inserting two darker ones," Harriman saw a huge difference in how the entire mosaic looks. That kind of attention to detail is what will make this mosaic pleasant and enjoyable.



Michaelanne Harriman, explaining the next direction for the mosaic



Reconstructing the Community Garden Mural



Bridge Mural

Out with the Old, in with the Old...and New

In 2005, on the bridge located on Cayuga Street between 5th and 6th Streets, a mural that was once painted by the kids of the community was tagged and covered in a lot of graffiti. Praise be to God, mural artist Bernie Wilke volunteered his time to design a new mural with students from Ayuda's Spring Art Courses. Even with a desing, none of this would have been possible without the donations from Manny Ramos and Kathryn Pannepacker, as well as the constant volunteering of Wilke.

This past winter, the mural that stood high over the Hunting Park Community Garden suffered extreme weather damage. The mural was torn down and nothing has been hanging over the garden to represent Community Gardener - Andy Nolan, the late Jeff Manson - Community Block Captain, and Community Garden Partner - the late Luis Hernandez. However, due to hope and perseverance, Michaelanne Harriman and the volunteers at the OKA House, hope to fix the pieces to the mural, to reinsert it into the garden.