

# **Texan artist directs students in painting mural**

In a wooden frame on a curved brick wall in the lobby of Our Lady of Victory School, Arbutus, a large mural of the community painted by method of pointillism is now visible when entering the building.

Pointillism is the art of applying small strokes or dots of color to a surface so that images blend from a distance. The images in this particular mural include those significant to Our Lady of Victory, including a prominent illustration of their building and other local Catholic schools such as The Cardinal Gibbons School, Baltimore, and Mount St. Joe, Irvington.

Community landmarks such as the Arbutus Fire Department, the Ice Cream Cottage, and St. Agnes Healthcare, Baltimore, are nestled into the painting, which evolves from the school's surrounding geography into Baltimore's inner harbor.

Painted by almost every hand of every student in grades PreK-8, the project was led by an artist-in-residence for two weeks, Sylvia Benitez, a graduate of St. Mark School, Catonsville, and the Seton Keough High School, Baltimore.

The collaboration between artist and school was coordinated through the Maryland Arts Council who paid half the cost of the residency (\$1,800) plus travel costs for Ms. Benitez, who resides in Texas. The school was responsible for the remaining half plus \$600 in materials.

Art teacher Maura Connor said what is already a good community spirit was boosted further by the connection between everyone involved. The mural is "a good commemoration. It is quite impressive; very simplistic but very well done. Everything is completely recognizable and the colors are just beautiful."

Reading specialist Joan Hargadon who is "very artistic" according to Mrs. Connor, assisted with coordinating the project. Jack Pundt from the maintenance department installed the wooden frame to house the large 4×6 panels for the mural.

“One of the very neat things about it,” said Mrs. Connor, “in addition to the experience of the kids having a hand in it; it was almost time lapsed photography because we worked in the lobby where there is a lot of traffic with students going by to the cafeteria and gym. Kids watched other kids painting. It was nice to see the older kids working with the younger kids.”

A few smaller panels were completed as well by the youngest students; these will be displayed elsewhere in high traffic areas. The mural was completed in time for Catholic Schools Week visitors to view.