

SAHUARITA

BY JESSIE KELLERMAN, SENIOR, SAHUARITA HIGH SCHOOL

Summer Art Program Teams High School, Town to Create Public Art

Just south of Tucson, in the small town of Sahuarita, the local high school runs an annual program that aims to visually enhance the town as it continues to develop and grow. Twelve years ago the town of Sahuarita, in alliance with the Pima Association of Governments, asked Sahuarita High School if their students could create functional public art, and from that sprang the Summer Art Program.

The Summer Art Program runs for one month each year, during which the selected students come up with concepts and designs as well as glaze tiles that are later installed onto benches and garbage cans throughout Sahuarita. In the most recent year of the program, the town requested a series of tile murals for their new underpass project.

“They’re really exceptional students,” says Larissa Laine, one of Sahuarita’s art teachers. Since she began running the program, Ms. Laine chose eight to 12 students per year to participate in the program based on a particular criteria. All

participants must have had at least gone through beginning art class and from there, Ms. Laine looked at the students’ grades and reviewed their artistic abilities. These students also have to be reliable as they are expected to show up everyday for the program in the summer, but most importantly, they must show a true interest in art.

For their participation, the students are paid an hourly rate in addition to receiving a semester of art credit. Yet it is the town of Sahuarita that is getting the real benefit from the program, gaining a sense of character and a unique beauty from the artwork. As to the future of the program, Ms. Laine said simply, “I don’t know if there’s an end in sight.”

***About the Author:** Jessie Kellerman is graduating this May from Sahuarita High School and plans to attend Pima Community College in Tucson to continue her studies in the field of photography. Her picture “Madera Canyon” won an Honorable Mention Award in the 2010 ASBA Jack Peterson Photography Contest.*

