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## Cultures unite in creation of mural

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The mighty tree rises toward the sky, its limbs stretching outward and twisting like tendrils reaching for something to hold on to. Splashes of color surround the tree, and within them are images of nature and faces, bodies and hands.

"The Colors of the World" is the name of the two-story mural that now faces the intersection of Cowardin Avenue and Hull Street in South Richmond. Led by a local artist, the mural was painted by students at Huguenot and George Wythe high schools through the ART 180 Intercultural Mural Proj-



### A work of art

Students bring a splash of color to South Richmond building. Visit [TimesDispatch.com](http://TimesDispatch.com), keyword: video.

ect. ART 180 is a program that provides artistic opportunities to individuals who come from challenging backgrounds as a way of allowing them to make a difference in their communities.

A dedication ceremony yesterday drew a crowd of local legisla-



JOE MAHONEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

Art coach Curtis Gutierrez spoke yesterday at the dedication of "The Colors of the World."

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JOE MAHONEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

Sebastian Wimbush, an artist and George Wythe High School student, examined a portion of the mural yesterday.

## Mural

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tors and city representatives, members of the Hispanic community and friends and family of the students and ART 180. The event also drew curious onlookers from the nearby community, as well as honks and shouts from passing drivers.

The ceremony was not just a celebration about the mural, but also what came from the experience of many different cultures working together, said Betsy Kelly, program manager for ART 180. The 10 student artists come from many different cultures, including Mexico, Bolivia, Hon-

duras, El Salvador and the Philippines. The program started in September, and its curriculum encourages cultural exchanges and positive conflict resolution. Using art as their focus, students break down cultural barriers.

Artist Curtis Gutierrez helped coach the students, and Rachel Mehl, a bilingual educator, coordinated the project.

Earlier this year the group was having trouble finding a space for the mural. The Broad Rock library branch was considered, but concern was raised over the appearance of the mural years from now. Also considered was Southside Plaza. Then the group reached out to Daniel Deckelman, who owns the building at Cowardin and

Hull. He both lives there and runs his business, Snake Oil Records and Recording.

He said yesterday that he was surprised at the trouble ART 180 went through finding the right space for their mural.

"To me it only makes sense" to have the mural on the side of his building, he said. "I think it looks fabulous. I couldn't be more grateful."

One of the student artists, Gregory Ford, is a rising 10th-grader at George Wythe. He said the mural's meaning is simple: "It shows that if everybody worked together, they could create a beautiful work of art."

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