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MARSHALLTOWN SCHOOLS TO HAVE SIDEWALK SAFETY MURALS INSTALLED

In an effort to increase the safety for students in Marshalltown, the Arts & Culture Alliance is partnering with the City of Marshalltown and the Marshalltown Community School District to create vibrant sidewalk murals at each of the schools in Marshalltown. In May of 2019, our community tragically lost an 8-year-old boy, Christian Maxon, after being struck by a car while crossing the street after school. We believe the arts provide hope, healing and are a creative way to address and solve community challenges. It is our priority to honor and pay tribute to Christian and his family by increasing safety, awareness, education, beautification and engagement in the arts through this project.

"In 2019, the Alliance launched our newest program, Marshalltown Murals. From the beginning, it was our priority to expand the program by partnering with the Marshalltown Schools to incorporate murals within the community," said Arts & Culture Alliance Executive Director Amber Danielson. "We believe this is a critical and significant opportunity to address the challenge of street safety in the school zones, while engaging students in a creative and educational way. We are honored to lead this project to pay tribute to Christian and his family."

The project's fall kick-off is possible thanks to a gracious donation by Jason and Jenny Matteson, who are sponsoring the mural at Franklin Elementary School. Jason and Jenny said the Sidewalk Safety Murals project "was extremely important to us – to promote safety awareness, as well as an offering of love and hope for Christian's family,"

Murals will first be placed at three of the 11 schools this fall - Franklin, Rogers and Woodbury elementary schools. The remaining MCSD schools, as well as St. Francis Catholic School and Marshalltown Christian School, will be completed in the spring/summer of 2021. Franklin Elementary, the school Christian attended and where the accident took place, will receive the first mural. Each mural will measure approximately 10' x 10'.

"I'm hoping this campaign will remind all people to be hyper-vigilant and careful any time they are driving or crossing the street because even if you have the right of way and follow proper safety precautions, there is no guarantee that everyone else will," said Christian's mom, Brittany Maxon. "We want to bring awareness to everyone - children, adults, drivers, and pedestrians - anything to prevent another family from suffering our heartbreak. Christian would want that. He loved everyone and would want his loss to help bring awareness and keep others safe."

MCSD Superintendent Dr. Theron Schutte said the project serves as a powerful way to honor Christian's life and as a critical safety reminder.

"MCSD is very excited to partner with the Marshall County Arts & Culture Alliance on the Sidewalk Mural Project in honor and remembrance of former Franklin Elementary student Christian Maxon. It is a step in the right direction of providing more education, support and attention to the critical importance of safe practices for motorists and pedestrians within our community," Dr. Schutte said.

The Alliance's Mural Selection Committee, which includes a local artist, an Alliance Board Member and a Marshalltown Public Art Committee Member, is working hard to finalize the mural design with the hand-selected artist, Lauren Gifford of Des Moines. The artist has granted us copyright of the mural, so we will be able to spread the message throughout the community. Our intention is to put the mural on signs to be placed at each of the schools' busy intersections and crosswalks to share the message to drivers traveling through school zones. The signs will be translated into Spanish.

The mural design and verbiage "Look Both Ways" was selected for many important reasons:

- It is vibrant and bold – our hope is it literally stops people in their tracks to remember street safety.
- The phrase is universal to everyone – people of all ages, from children to senior citizens, and people of all ethnicities and abilities.
- The phrase is applicable to everyone – walkers and drivers, allowing the messaging to be spread community wide.

Franklin's mural will have a special dedication to Christian including a lightning bolt, representing Flash his favorite super hero, and his favorite color, blue.

The painting will begin over the next couple of weeks, with the goal to have the first three murals completed by the end of October. The Alliance concentrate on fundraising over the winter months for the remaining schools. Each mural is \$1,500 and we still need another \$12,000 to complete this project at the remaining schools

"Christian was the most caring child I have known. I am blessed to be his grandmother. It is a great honor to have his memory kept alive with this project that will remind drivers to be extra cautious in school zones and remind the students to be careful when crossing the streets," said Christian's grandmother, Denise Balot.

The Arts & Culture Alliance, a non-profit organization, was created in 2004 to cultivate a community of arts and culture by supporting, promoting and enriching existing opportunities and by seeking new possibilities. Our mission allows us to focus on enhancing the quality of life in Marshalltown by making it a place in which arts and culture thrive and our community flourishes.

To make a tax-deductible donation toward the Sidewalk Safety Mural Project:

Please make checks out to Arts & Culture Alliance – send to PO BOX 386, Marshalltown, IA, 50158

Online Donations Accepted at www.artsandculturealliance.org/support

**click the donate button and select sidewalk mural project*

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For more information or questions, please contact us at (641) 752-ARTS (2787) or director@artsandculturealliance.org

Learn more about the project at www.artsandculturealliance.org/marshalltown-murals