

PORTRAIT OF THE COMMUNITY

Sprocket Mural Works' largest project showcases Harrisburg residents, behind the brush and on the wall.

BY MADDIE GITTENS



Sbarnee Burnett

Odds are, if you travel through Brooklyn, N.Y., you'll see some of Harrisburg-native Ian Potter's artwork—it's hard to miss.

Although his name suggests a different type of art, Potter is a painter. Much of his time is spent on ladders, lifts and platforms against Brooklyn buildings. He works for Colossal Media, a mural company that hand paints advertisements for brands like Nike, Spotify, Amazon and Coca Cola.

Colossal is, as its name suggests, huge, and Potter is one of their top painters.

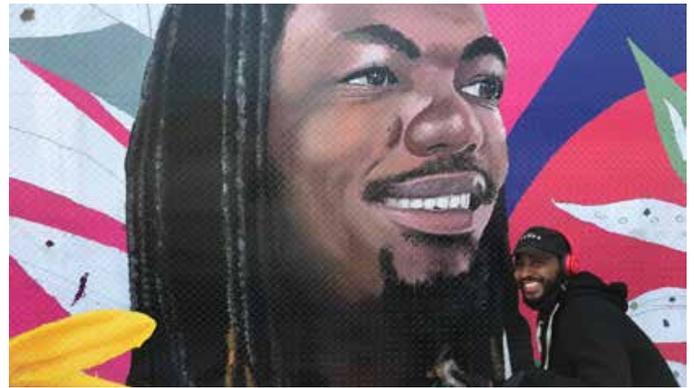
But before he was scaling walls in Brooklyn, assisting with the hundreds of murals that Colossal completes each year, Potter got his start at Gamut Theatre in Harrisburg.

This summer, he made the trip to Harrisburg to give back to the community that gave him his start. Potter, along with a team of local apprentices, painted Sprocket Mural Works' largest mural yet, on the Mulberry Street Bridge in Harrisburg, as part of the 2021 Harrisburg Mural Festival.

While the mural itself is sprawling, the story of collaboration and education behind its creation may be even more inspiring.

INVESTING IN LOCAL

The Mulberry Street Bridge, which connects downtown Harrisburg to Allison Hill, once held a mural spanning 640 feet, picturing scenes of life in the city.



Ian Potter, Jonathan Molina, Kwatei Hector & Sharnee Burnett

Bryan Hickman

However, in 2014, PennDOT removed the mural to rehabilitate the bridge. Since then, the bridge has sat as an empty canvas—until this summer, when Sprocket got its hands on it.

Sprocket hopes it has brought life back to the bridge through a new mural recently completed, sponsored by M&T Bank and the Pennsylvania College of Art & Design, with grant funding from The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC).

The mural features larger-than-life portraits of actual Harrisburg residents amidst swirling colors. As cars drive by, they see an elderly woman, a mother and child, a smiling man, a woman with fiery red hair—all members of the community, maybe even a familiar face.

“We wanted to really re-create the beauty of that project,” said Meg Caruso, co-founder of Sprocket, referring to the previous mural that was on the bridge. “It’s definitely exciting because it’s our biggest project yet.”

But Caruso said that her favorite part of creating the mural was utilizing the talent of local artists who worked as apprentices under Potter’s guidance.

While apprentices Sharnee Burnett, Kwatei Hector, Bryan Hickman and Jonathan Molina all have experience in art, none have worked on large-scale murals, Caruso said.

“To have a mentor like Ian, it’s really valuable to their growth and to Harrisburg, really,” Caruso said. “It means that, for future projects, we can pull from more local artists.”

Kwatei “Q” Hector, an artist from Allison Hill, has been drawing since he was a kid and has held some

exhibitions, but never worked on a mural project.

This summer, he participated in Sprocket’s planter painting project in Allison Hill. Recognizing his potential, Caruso offered him the apprenticeship with Potter.

Hector loved seeing how his painted planter positively impacted his neighborhood and couldn’t wait to be part of another beautification project, he said.

“I’m grateful they’re beautifying the city and letting me be a part of it,” he said. “It’s a blessing to me.”

Hector said that Potter has taught him techniques including using an electro pounce machine, a pen that burns tiny holes onto a large sheet of paper to create a stencil to use when creating the mural. He then learned about “pouncing,” in which an artist taps a bag of charcoal powder over the holes in the stencil to transfer the outline of an image onto a wall. This is the first time that Sprocket has used these methods for a mural in Harrisburg, Caruso said.

Potter has also coached Hector as he’s worked on painting the portraits of the residents.

“Ian has a really beautiful ability to teach,” Caruso said.

HOME GROWN

While Potter is a mentor to artists now, he remembers being an apprentice himself.

In the early 2000s, Gamut Theatre hired him out of college as an actor and set designer. He would, almost singlehandedly, design, build and paint sets for the theater that often features plays by William Shakespeare, among others.

Judd “Pop” Nicholson, the father of Gamut-co-

founder Clark Nicholson, was Potter’s mentor at the theater. With his experience as an old-school sign painter, before vinyl billboards replaced hand-painted ads, Judd taught Potter how to paint lifelike scenery.

“If I would make a mistake, he would be like ‘don’t worry about it; no matter what anyone tells you, you can paint,’” Potter said. “It stuck with me and propels me forward. It just so happened that, years later, I would become the modern-day equivalent of a sign painter.”

Judd taught Potter the methodology of painting, but most importantly, Potter said, at Gamut, he learned how to have a strong work ethic.

It’s this idea that he tried to pass onto his apprentices with Sprocket.

“It’s so cool to bring back some of that skill and knowledge,” Potter said. “This project is about lifting up our local artists in Harrisburg.”

While Caruso said that Sprocket is always trying to find ways to use the talents of local artists for its projects, they’ve especially focused their efforts this year, she said. That has shown through projects like the planter painting in Allison Hill, a mural painted by Harrisburg artist Sarah Fogg in Penbrook and the Mulberry Street Bridge mural, among others.

“There’s so much value in supporting local,” Caruso said. “We want to support our local artists.”

To learn more about Sprocket Mural Works, visit www.sprocketmuralworks.com.

PEDAL & PAINT

Sprocket Mural Works teams up with Recycle Bicycle on reimagined mural for new bike shop location.

BY MADDIE GITTENS



When I visited Recycle Bicycle in Harrisburg in 2019, I'd never seen so many bikes in one place before. At the time, they had a literal mountain of bikes piled in the middle of their warehouse on Atlas Street in Uptown Harrisburg.

That was in September 2019, and volunteers at the nonprofit were preparing to move the thousands of bicycles and equipment out of the building, which had recently been sold. Within a month, they found a new home on Chestnut Street in Allison Hill, returning them to the neighborhood the organization had worked out of for over 20 years before moving to Uptown.

Recycle Bicycle operated out of the Atlas Street warehouse for four years, providing free bikes to community members, teaching them how to repair them and to stay safe while riding.

While the crew packed up, longtime volunteer and board member Jenifer Donnelly climbed the ladder to a loft in the warehouse. Tucked among the tools, she found something familiar.

In 2015, Recycle Bicycle's building became one of Sprocket Mural Works' first canvasses in the city. A large mural was installed on the front of the brick building, covering the garage doors and windows with a whimsical scene of children and swirling purples and blues.

Up in the loft in 2019, Donnelly found the stencils that were used to create the work of art.

"That mural became a part of who we were," she said. "It really was our identity."

Donnelly kept the stencils, and volunteers pulled off a few panels from the mural as Recycle Bicycle packed up and rolled out, quite literally, headed to their new building in Allison Hill.

Recycle Bicycle settled into its new home, but the building was missing one thing.

In mid-July, I met up with Donnelly and other volunteers with Recycle Bicycle and Sprocket Mural Works as they cut out over 100 stencils for a new mural that would bring the bike shop full circle.

STEERING FORCE

Artist Ralphie Seguinot was the quiet force behind the bright, bold painting on Recycle Bicycle's Atlas Street mural and the reimagined new piece on Allison Hill.

The mural at Recycle Bicycle's previous location was one of Seguinot's first times creating such a large-scale work of art. He was inspired by the nonprofit's mission of helping those in need in the community and, having two kids of his own, he connected with their priority of serving youth.

Seguinot took art classes in grade school, but never had any formal training. Inspired by famous street artist Banksy, Seguinot started teaching himself how to paint in 2013.

After the Recycle Bicycle mural, he worked with Sprocket to create a similar style mural, again featuring a child, on the side of the Sayford Market in Midtown Harrisburg.

During the pandemic, Seguinot admitted his art took a backseat. He was

unmotivated and uninspired—until Sprocket asked him to paint yet another mural for Recycle Bicycle, where it had all started.

"I'm extremely appreciative that they're willing to have me come back into their space," he said. "I'm humbled that people enjoy what I've been doing."

The new mural spans the front and sides of the bike shop in Allison Hill. The focus is on a child riding a bike, again with lots of color splashed on the background.

"I really like his art because of the way it makes people feel," said Megan Caruso, Sprocket Mural Works' co-founder. "I just find them to be really pure and colorful, and people respond to them."

Caruso said that, while using stencils is a common form of street art, she didn't know of any other artists who used stencils to create such large-scale murals.

Volunteer Trish Newdeck helped cut the stencils for the mural, which brought together two organizations that she loved. Through Newdeck's son, who used to volunteer with Recycle Bicycle, she got to witness the work that they did in the community and fell in love with their mission. Newdeck also volunteered with Sprocket before, helping with the Jackson Hotel mural, which collapsed with the building in 2021, and painting a duck statue downtown.

"I really appreciate the work that both organizations are doing, so it was really a no-brainer," she said.

IN TANDEM

The Recycle Bicycle mural is part of the 2021 Harrisburg Mural Festival, which also includes creating a pocket park in Midtown and painting murals to celebrate Black lives.

This project holds a special significance to Caruso, who loves the idea of working with another small nonprofit in Harrisburg.

"There's a kinship because we are very similar," Caruso said. "They're bringing a lot of joy to the community. For us, it's through art and, for them, it's through bikes."

Donnelly explained that Recycle Bicycle raised half of the funds for the mural project through donations from supporters. Having a mural on their new building was important to them and to their mission of creating a community space.

"When you do something like this to a building, it just brings all eyes to you," she said. "It will seal our identity in the community."

Caruso was happy to partner with an organization that was excited to display their artwork on their building and that recognized the impact that beautification has on neighborhoods.

"Hopefully, it'll catch a lot of attention," she said. "Part of their history from Atlas Street can move to their new home." **B**

To learn more about Recycle Bicycle Harrisburg, visit www.rbbburg.org.

For more information about Sprocket Mural Works, visit www.sprocketmuralworks.com.

SOME HIP HOP LUV

Young Harrisburg area rapper Kierra Luv charts her future.

BY MADDIE CONLEY GITTENS

In 2018, Kierra Luv uploaded a video to her Instagram page, not thinking much of it. She was rapping freestyle to Cardi B's track, "Money." She captioned the video, "Only 16, but move like I'm grown."

It was just a minute-long clip that she recorded in her attic, but it quickly became much more after Cardi B shared it to her own page. Suddenly, Luv had millions of views on her freestyle.

"It hit me by surprise," she said. "It was a flip-switch moment."

From then on, everything changed. Luv had people listening, and she had to keep their attention.

Reeling her audience in with her rhymes, Luv's lyrics touch on her life experiences and the struggles she has gone through. It's the maturity in her raps that she believes hooks her audience, despite her age. Being young and a female in a male-dominated genre aren't disadvantages, but make her stand out, she said.

When she first started rapping in 2016, it was just a new hobby to try out. Luv was into music, but had no experience with writing her own lyrics. One of her favorite shows at the time was Lifetime's "The Rap Game," in which young artists battled to win a recording contract.

"I just wanted to see if I could do it," Luv said.

She tried out for the show that year and, while she wasn't chosen, the experience energized her to become more consistent with writing and recording content.

Luv began to develop as an artist, creating more freestyle videos for social media and then signing with a record label in 2019, which she has since parted ways with. From there, she started releasing singles like "Automatic" and "Don't I."

Her songs rely on themes of how Luv has gone through difficult times but is rising above them.

I remember days there was nothing left to eat/ So we only had one option we would starve ourselves to sleep, but I/ I make this thing look too easy, don't I/ Make lookin' good look great, don't I

—From "Don't I"

She also touches on her relationship experiences and heartbreaks. For only being 18, Luv doesn't think her age shows in her lyrics.

"I'm talking about things they wouldn't expect," she said. "Everything I say in my songs is advice, and I just hope people apply it their lives in whatever way they can."

In 2020, Luv's mixtape, "Take It Or Leave It," dropped with 10 songs, a few of them already released singles. Well-known Canadian hip hop artist Tory Lanez, rapper iann dior and rising R&B star Ray Moon made appearances on the mixtape, as well.

She sees the mixtape as her introduction into the music world.

"I wanted to plant the seeds, and right now is the time the seeds are sprouting," Luv said. "People can look back and be like, this is where she started and this is how she grew."

With her mixtape garnering over 4 million streams, it seems like the seeds are sprouting.

Luv remembers bumping into alternative singer-songwriter Billie Eilish in an airport. Luv's cousin, who was with her, asked Eilish if she knew Luv's music. Eilish said she did, and that stuck with Luv.

"It's just crazy," she said. "For her to even see what I got going on shows me, well I've got to be on the right path."

Luv is now an independent artist, recording at a nearby studio in Lemoyne. However, she has plans to move to Atlanta in the near future.

Even though Luv was bummed she couldn't hold concerts during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's given her plenty of time to work on more projects. She said that she has a lot in the works, including many singles.

"I'm working on so many different things and so many different ways to explain the story," she said. **E**

You can listen to Kierra Luv's music on all major streaming platforms. Find her on Instagram at @kierraluv.





PAINTING PRIDE

Local artists invest in their neighborhood through beautification project.

BY MADDIE GITTENS

Althea Lynn King remembers painting her boots with nail polish as a kid growing up in Harrisburg. She was always DIYing, sketching and creating.

Now, she has her own son, whom she homeschools along with her nephew. King still loved art, but, with two little boys running around, time for her own interests often got pushed to the back burner.

“I definitely got lost in being a mom and forgot about me,” she said.

That began to change when King spotted a flyer—a call for artists for an upcoming painting project in Allison Hill. Local nonprofits Sprocket Mural Works and Tri County Community Action were seeking artists to leave their mark on a number of flower planters installed throughout Allison Hill.

King decided to apply, but admitted that she was doubtful she’d get chosen. Little did she know, a few weeks later, she’d be kneeling on Market Street, paintbrush in hand.

King painted what she knew was important to her and to her community—family.

“I wanted to bring the power of mom into it,” she said of her “mom squad” painting.

In both English and Spanish, the phrase “protect our kids, teach our kids,” is painted on the planter.

“For my son to be able to walk by and say ‘that’s something my mom did,’ it’s huge,” she said.

The planter-painting project was meant to add to the beauty of the Allison Hill neighborhood, explained Sprocket co-founder Meg Caruso. But the effects reached further. For King, and many of the other artists, the experience was one of empowerment and pride in their roots.

STROKE OF HOPE

What began to happen among artists and in the community is exactly what Tri County had hoped for when coming up with the project.

“This is encouraging people to take pride in their community,” said Danielle Krebs, communications manager at Tri County. “It also gave artists the opportunity to be creative and give back to their community.”

Tri County supplied the canvas—large cement planters—along with flowers, and Sprocket helped connect with artists and provided paint. The project kicked off Sprocket’s 2021 Harrisburg Mural Festival, which includes many other projects throughout the summer.



Painted planters on Allison Hill, as part of the 2021 Harrisburg Mural Festival





Krebs also saw this as a way to address an aspect of Tri County's Heart of the Hill Community Action Plan which they developed with residents' input. As outlined in the plan, which was updated in 2020, community members expressed a desire for public art and beautification projects in the neighborhood.

For this project, Sprocket looked specifically for artists from the neighborhood and successfully gathered a group of 20 artists, ranging in age and experience.

One of the younger artists is 20-year-old Kiara Dawson, a Harrisburg High School alum.

Dawson has always loved art, she said. She helped design the cougar head painting inside Harrisburg's Rowland Intermediate School, designed school T-shirts and painted a mural at the high school for her senior project.

But when her former art teacher, Rachel Aslan, encouraged her to apply for the planter project, she was nervous. She doesn't like being in the spotlight, she said.

However, Aslan successfully got Dawson, as well as two of her students from this past year, to apply. All three were selected.

"We try to talk to our kids about the importance of public art, and this was the perfect opportunity for them to get involved in their community," Aslan said.

Dawson rose to the occasion, creating a piece that celebrates individuality and showcases her own journey towards overcoming depression and accepting herself.

"My mural gives people hope that things will get better," she said.

COMMUNITY BEAUTY

Artist Tristan Bond is known locally for his art, with murals on the sides of HMAc and Ciervos Pizza. His painting on the planter on Market Street is much smaller than some of his other work, but carries a lot of significance.



Harrisburg artist Tristan Bond paints a planter.

Bond has memories of that spot where his artwork now sits. He remembers being a kid, walking with his mom to the fried chicken shop and the five-and-dime store just off the sidewalk. At the bus stop nearby, he used to take a crayon to his coloring book while they waited.

"It's like it's come full circle," he said.

Bond's mother passed away in February, but sitting on that corner, he could still picture himself up on her shoulders, walking through the neighborhood.

"Being able to touch on the memory of her—it means a lot," he said.

His painting shows robotic hands planting and watering flowers. He hoped to capture the importance of organic growth alongside continued technological advancement. On one side of the planter, Bond painted "The Hill," what many of the neighbors call Allison Hill, he said.

"It brings a sense of pride to the community," he said. "There's art and beauty in this community. It's rough around the edges, but there's so much beauty in it." **B**

To learn more about Sprocket Mural Works, visit www.sprocketmuralworks.com. For more information on Tri County Community Action, visit www.cactricounty.org.



CUP OF CULTURE

Tasty coffee, inspiring reads at Good Brotha's Book Café.

BY MADDIE CONLEY GITTENS



Stefan Hawkins

Stefan Hawkins never owned a business before this past summer—now he owns two.

First came House of Vegans, the soul food joint that challenged perceptions of vegan food and gained national attention. We non-vegans realized zero-meat fried chicken is possible and wondered how non-dairy mac and cheese can taste so good.

But, while customers lined up at House of Vegans, owners Stefan Hawkins and Laquana Barber had another plan in the works. Why operate just one business on the 1400-block of N. 3rd Street?

Hawkins and Barber opened Good Brotha's Book Café just over six months after opening their first restaurant across the street.

"After I saw the success of [House of Vegans] and how the community got behind us, I was like 'hey, I can get into this a little more,'" Hawkins said.

Hawkins wants to do more than just serve a good cup of coffee—he wants to fill a gap he sees in the city. Good Brotha's will promote African American literature and art.

Shelves with books for sale line the walls of the café displaying the work of Ta-Nehisi Coates, Ibram X. Kendi, Toni Morrison and other Black authors.

"Representation means a lot to the Black community," Hawkins said. "Our community needs somewhere to go, something to call our own."

NEW ENERGY

At any good coffee shop, it's all about the vibe. With some neo-soul playing in the background, Hawkins hopes the café will be a place for people to hang out, enjoy a cup and read a book.

But a vibe must go hand-in-hand with a great mug of joe. As if starting the café weren't enough,

Hawkins began his own coffee brand, Fifth Acres Coffee Company, to serve at Good Brotha's.

The name recognizes the areas of the city where he grew up—N. 5th Street and Hall Manor in South Harrisburg, sometimes referred to as South Acres.

Hawkins works with a roaster to produce the coffee, which is sourced from African countries. He eventually hopes to learn how to roast it himself.

"I'm trying to bring something new and energetic to the community," he said.

Behind the counter, steaming milk and brewing coffee is barista Zinnia Moore. She previously worked for a shop that served Starbucks Coffee, but is excited to now work at Good Brotha's with its unique atmosphere.

"The morning coffee can change your whole day," Moore said. "I can change someone's day. I get to interact with customers, and I love meeting different people."

She's down for experimenting with new coffee and tea combinations and has a few new creations up her sleeve right now. Become a regular, and Moore might just have your order ready when you walk in.

Besides coffee, Good Brotha's serves baked goods from Harrisburg-based Cece's Cake Shop, owned by Cecilia Davis. Smoothies and House of Vegans' fresh juices are available, as well.

Opening House of Vegans this past summer was Hawkins' first business venture. In the past months, he has grown in confidence as an entrepreneur and learned a lot about owning a restaurant.

"I've learned that customer service is paramount to make a good business thrive," he said. "We put customers first. I wouldn't have been able to open two locations without them."

VISION & VIBES

Bryan "Prolifik" Hickman has been a big supporter of his friend Hawkins and his businesses from the beginning.

"When he started House of Vegans, the first thing I wanted to do is support him," he said.

Hickman decided to help the best way he knew how—through art.

Under the name "Prolifik," Hickman creates large canvas paintings inspired by African and African American culture.

Two original pieces hang in House of Vegans, and now two more decorate Good Brotha's. The paintings in the café are for sale. Hickman sees the collaboration as a way for the friends to support each other's businesses.

"With everything going on this year with social injustice, there was more importance of supporting Black-owned businesses," he said.

Through highlighting Black culture, literature and art at Good Brotha's, Hawkins hopes to inspire young African American kids, he said. He also wants to serve as a role model to encourage young people to become business owners.

"I want this to be a place to relax and chill, but also get inspiration," he said.

One way he plans to make that happen is through a book club that the café will host. Promoting literacy and education is important to Hawkins.

Even with Good Brotha's opening, Hawkins is already thinking about more House of Vegans locations and determining his next move.

"2020 was good for me," he said. "2021 will be even better." **B**

Good Brotha's Book Café is located at 1419 N. 3rd St., Harrisburg. For more information, visit their Facebook page.



Artist Gloria Jean Martin



CREATION & POLLINATION

Sprocket Mural Works creates pocket park and mural to encourage environmentalism in Harrisburg.

BY MADDIE GITTENS

Patrick Alley in Midtown Harrisburg likely would've fit the description of what moms picture when they tell their kids to avoid walking in dark alleys.

It was an overgrown, neglected space known for crime and trash dumping behind a strip of businesses on the 1300-block of N. 3rd Street—not exactly pedestrian-friendly.

But co-founder of Sprocket Mural Works, Meg Caruso, saw potential.

In 2019, Sprocket completed a mural on the side of the Broad Street Army and Navy Store on Sayford Street. During the outreach process, Caruso was talking with neighbors and heard a recurring theme—their dissatisfaction with the adjacent Patrick Alley. Caruso and volunteers developed a plan.

Starting on Martin Luther King Jr. day in 2020, a group of over 30 people from Sprocket and the neighborhood group, Friends of Midtown, hauled out two truckloads of trash, furniture and weeds

from the alley. Since then, there have been several more cleanup days.

Over the next year, the organization, with the help of local volunteers, transformed the blighted alley into a pocket park—a colorful, natural escape.

Volunteers planted over 100 new plants, installed a rain barrel to water them, spread wood chips, and, in typical Sprocket style, brought in an artist to paint a mural.

“Murals and plants are both very powerful forces individually, but even more so together,” Caruso said.

BEE CREATIVE

While the Patrick Alley project has had a huge aesthetic impact on the neighborhood, Caruso was quick to point out that the endeavor was far more encompassing.

Funded largely by an Environmental Education Grant from Pennsylvania’s Department of Environmental Protection, the mural and park were created to be both environmentally friendly and educational.

“We are really happy to be able to support and work with them,” said Kathleen Banski, the environmental education program coordinator for the DEP. “They are really trying to identify what the community needs.”

While the DEP funded 51 projects in 2021 and has awarded over \$12 million in grants over the years, Banski believes that this is the first time they’ve funded an artistic mural. Sprocket’s vision and energy drew them in, she said.

The mural, by artist Gloria Jean Martin, features flowers and honeybees, highlighting the vital role of pollinators and native plants in the state’s agricultural environment.

Martin, a Harrisburg native, finds inspiration for her work through nature, fitting in perfectly with the theme of the project.

“Nature is our first teacher,” she said. “We learn a lot from nature. It impacts our lives.”

Caruso said that Martin was a natural choice for the project since she specializes in painting whimsical floral scenes, including bees and butterflies.

According to Penn State University’s Center for Pollinator Research, the state is home to hundreds of species of pollinators, including bees, butterflies, moths and beetles. Crops that rely on pollinators contribute over \$260 million to the state’s economy annually.

However, according to the center, pollinator populations across the world are shrinking due to habitat fragmentation, pesticide use, climate change and the spread of emergent pathogens, parasites and predators.

The mural shines a spotlight on these crucial creatures to the environment, Caruso said. Informational signage will also accompany the mural as an educational tool.

But not only does the mural seek to communicate a message, the entire park is an example of what residents can do to create an environmentally friendly garden in their own space.

Manada Conservancy, a land trust dedicated to preserving land in Dauphin County, donated 100 native plants to Sprocket’s pocket park, said Jennifer Dunlap, former executive director.

The plants include thin leaf sunflowers, raspberry wine bee balm, purple coneflowers and black-eyed Susans, among others.

According to Dunlap, native plants are the foundation for a healthy ecosystem and sustain creatures, such as pollinators. However, native plants are disappearing as development encroaches and invasive species take over.

Dunlap and Sprocket hope that the pocket park will serve as a model for the community.

“Planting native plants is something almost everyone can do,” Dunlap said. “It’s a way that anyone can be a part of restoring the environment.”

Manada offers the community a chance to start their own native gardens at their native plant sales. One will take place at the East Hanover Township Nature Park on Sept. 11.

They also plan to hold a pop-up native plant sale in partnership with Sprocket near the pocket park.

“We want to make it easy to get native plants into

local people’s hands,” Caruso said.

Not only did Manada share in Sprocket’s vision for creating more gardens in the city, other organizations donated, as well.

Master gardeners from Penn State University brought armfuls of plants and bulbs to plant in the pocket park. The city also pitched in, leaving a pile of woodchips for volunteers to spread.

“There’s a lot of people invested, and hopefully with the mural, we can find ways to not only make it look good, but have people learn something,” Caruso said.

PLANTING BEAUTY

When Puja Gellerman moved to Harrisburg a few years ago, she was hoping to get involved in the community. She loved to garden and started asking around to see where the local green spaces were.

When Gellerman started talking with Caruso about the neglected Patrick Alley and creating a vision for it, she saw an opportunity to get involved in bringing beauty to the community.

“As an occupational therapist, I know and understand the therapeutic value of gardening,” she said. “I’ve always had the belief that the beauty around us helps us feel good.”

Gellerman participated in the first cleanup day in 2020 and more since then. She hopes it will serve as a “pilot space” for other areas in the city.

Sprocket is already working with Manada to discuss future partnerships and ways to enhance Harrisburg’s beauty and environment.

“The strength that they have, that we are really excited about, is that they are going to be making local connections,” Banski said. “Environmental education isn’t teaching people what to think, but how to think about what is going on in their community.”

Most of Sprocket’s murals involve some preliminary cleanup and landscaping, but this was their first that included gardening on a large scale. According to Caruso, she hopes it’s not their last.

“I think this is a great example of what can be done in the city when everyone pitches in,” Caruso said. “We have so many people willing to help make things beautiful.” **E**

The Patrick Alley Pocket Park is located in Midtown Harrisburg. For more information, visit www.sprocketmuralworks.com.

To learn more about Manada Conservancy, visit www.manada.org.



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Volunteers planting flowers and spreading mulch.

