

# Making mural teaches youngsters about overcoming racism

► *The mural will hang in Henry Elementary School.*

By Gary W. Morrison  
The Grand Rapids Press

Communication through art is the idea behind a mural painting project conducted by local artist and teacher Eugenia D. Marve at Grand Rapids Community College as part of the school's pre-college summer program.

When complete, the 7 1/2-by-6 1/2-foot ceramic mural will hang in Henry Elementary School.

The communication from the mural doesn't just come from another person's interpretation of the work, Marve said. It required communication among the 17 area school students who participated on the project as well.

"These students come from different racial, social, and economic backgrounds," Marve said. "I wanted to provide young adults from different backgrounds a chance to come together and interact. I wanted them to come together and talk about those things, to talk about issues of racism, kindness, and the environment."

As an example, Marve said that she and the students talked about the impact of graffiti on the neighborhood, especially the economic impact.

"We talked about what happens when businesses or families move from a neighborhood because of it," she said. "That

also lead to discussions about the impact of taking drugs and telling ethnic jokes. I don't think that kind of dialog is too heavy for kids."

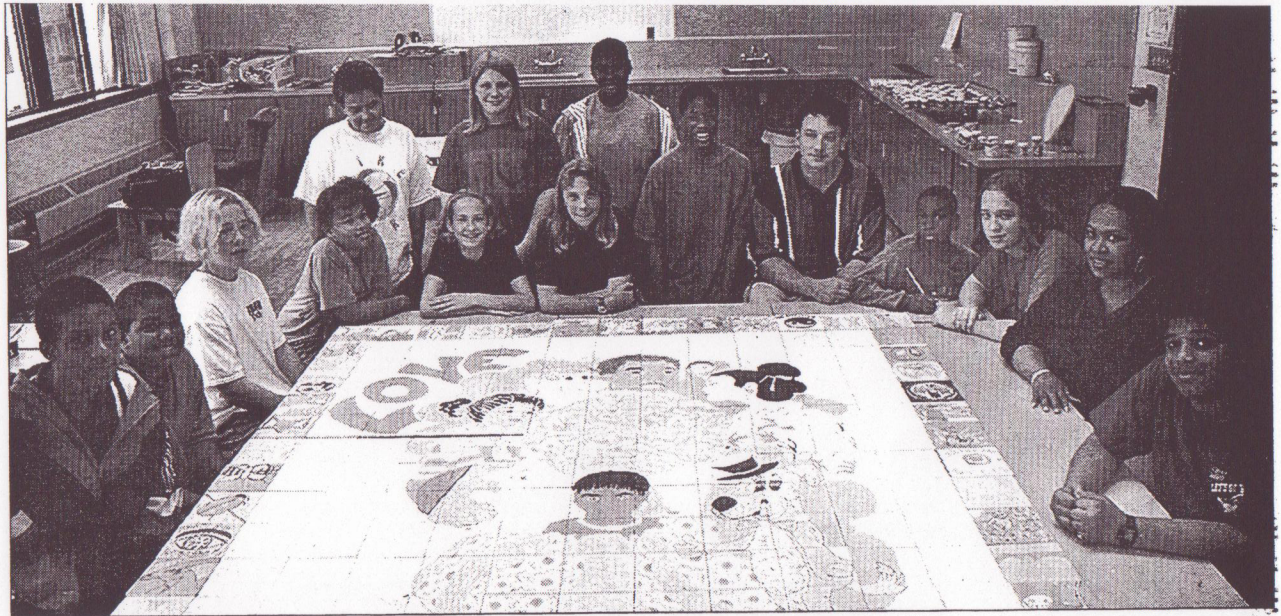
Many of the ideas that surfaced during their discussions became a part of the mural. Because the mural was going to go to an elementary school, the students were encouraged to draw pictures of animals and cartoon characters to convey their ideas of love and non-violence.

"We wanted to use pictures that young children can relate to," Marve said, "because these are issues and things we wanted the kids to remember. But it was also real important to incorporate different symbols from different cultures."

Magen Hartwig, an eighth-grader at Hills and Dales Middle School in the Northview District, said she learned a lot about ceramics while working on the project and would like to pursue a career in art.

"I have also thought about some of those things we talked about," Hartwig said, "and I would like to come back and do this again."

The mural will be unveiled at a community reception from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday at Henry Elementary School, 419 Henry SE.



PRESS PHOTOS/JEFF KIESSEL  
A message of love and nonviolence is displayed on the mural, above, created by students in the summer school project at Grand Rapids Community College. At left, instructor Eugenia Marve talks to students about creating the mural.