

“It will give an impression of the town to visitors and others.”

Pastor Dennis Nice
True Vine Christian Fellowship



Rusty Rao/News-Register

CHANGE OF SCENERY

Muralist brightens Fourth and Adams with vineyard view

By MELANIE JOHNSON
For the News-Register

When summer began, tents and piles of belongings and debris marked the corner of Fourth and Adams streets in McMinnville. The weathered mural nearby seemed a fitting backdrop.

But the makeshift homes and their inhabitants are gone now. The area has been cleaned up, but the mural looked tired and tattered.

A young woman, her hair pulled up, was preparing to do something about that. She'd wrapped a torn piece of muslin canvas around her head to guard against drops of paint as she works.

She has "simplicity" tattooed on her upper left arm. "It represents the way I want to live my life," she said.

She's determined to "cut the crap and just do the things that are important to me." And art is one of those things.

The artist is Ashley Phillips and the site of the mural is the True Vine Christian Fellowship's downtown quarters.

Phillips stirred a container of yellow paint with a stick, then dipped her fingers into it. Using her fingers, she stroked three curved lines on the 12-by-90-foot wall.

She began work in mid-July, so it is well along now. Members of the congregation donated \$10,000 to cover the cost of the project. The plan is to portray a vineyard scene inspired by the landscape visible from the Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey east of Carlton.

Passing drivers will have three to four seconds



Rusty Rao/News-Register

Artist Ashley Phillips is painting a new mural on the side of the True Vine Christian Fellowship's building in downtown McMinnville.

of viewing time as they travel down Adams. "It will give an impression of the town to visitors and others," said True Vine Pastor Dennis Nice.

In preparation, about 15 volunteers spent four workdays scraping the 20-year-old previous mural and the underlying stucco. Among the helpers was John Johnson, who made his home in a tent near the First Federal parking lot until a new city ordinance forced him to vacate.

Phillips, who signs her pieces Ashley Hope, became interested in art as a young child.

"I was homeschooled," she said. Her father, Reid Phillips, who draws, sculpts and once worked as a tattoo artist, served as her mentor.

She worked mostly with pencil at first. "I checked out books from the library about horses and tried to draw what I saw in the books," she said.

After finishing high school, she spent a few months in France, then six months attending the Perth Art Evangelist School in Australia. The experience there convinced her she could have a meaningful career in art.

"Australia has tons of public art, and I was really inspired by that," she said. And as part of her coursework, she traveled to Kolkata, India, to paint murals in schools.

When she returned, she took a figure-drawing class at Chemeketa Community College. Then she launched her own art business and took a job on the side at The Merri Artist.

Phillips did her first mural for a couple who heard about her through the store's co-workers. She painted a galaxy on the ceiling of their son's bedroom.

"My first public piece is located on Davis, between Third and Fourth, behind the Oak," she said. She volunteered to do it because she knew the owners, Corey and Tara Rich, and wanted some experience.

"I just saw a blank wall and wanted to do something with it," she said. "I contacted them with the idea and they said, 'Yeah, go for it.'"

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After finishing high school, Ashley Phillips traveled to Perth, Australia, to attend art school for six months. "Australia has tons of public art, and I was really inspired by that," said the muralist. Rusty Rao/News-Register

Scenery

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She's since completed a mural for the Flag & Wire Coffee Co., where she now works. She describes it as a "fun, funky piece," noting, "It's very bright and colorful."

Then there were the bus assignments.

"Yamhill County Transit

had a bus they wanted me to paint for the Alien Days Parade," she said. "I told them yes because I thought it would be fun."

Six months ago, the transit agency asked her to create another one.

In addition to murals, she paints portraits. "It's a part of my business that is not so public," she said, as most hang in private homes.

For now, Phillips is content pursuing her local art

business, caring for horses at Covey Creek, outside Lafayette, and working at the coffee shop. But someday, she said, "I would love to take my art traveling. It would be cool to go to cities around the world and paint."

The church mural is set for unveiling Sept. 20. Anyone inspired to have her do another can reach her through her Ashley Hope Instagram account.

