



ArtHouse Founder and Artistic Director Don Pangman (from left to right), United Way Oakville Community Projects Associate Jim Turriff, STRIDE South Halton Manager Mark Cox, Oakville Galleries Education Officer Elizabeth Underhill, ArtHouse Program Administrator Gemma Hagerman and ArtHouse program participants Brianna Buelow, 10, Linda Altamirano, 8, Candy Altamirano, 7, and Gautam Patel, 7, unveil their collaborative mural at STRIDE: Supported Training & Rehabilitation In Diverse Environments in Oakville. | photo by Julia Le - Oakville Beaver (Follow on Twitter @halton\_photog or www.facebook.com/HaltonPhotog)

## STRIDE mural captures children's artistic work

by Julia Le  
Oakville Beaver Staff

A mural capturing the creativity of some Oakville children adorns a wall of a new bistro at STRIDE: Supported Training & Rehabilitation In Diverse Environments.

About a dozen children who have been participating in ArtHouse's free extra-curricular arts programming for children aged 7-12, who may not otherwise have access to free-related programs, gathered at the Oakville centre to see what they helped create.

The project, a collaboration of several groups coming together to create a meaningful art piece, began last year on the suggestion of Jim Turriff, a community projects associate with United Way of Oakville.

He connected STRIDE, a non-profit that provides employment support for those struggling with mental health or addiction issues, with charitable organization ArtHouse and one of its program partners, Oakville Galleries.

Elizabeth Underhill and Kat Gomboc, who both work at Oakville Galleries and are instructors for some of Arthouse's programs, worked closely with their students to create the concept and design to fill the blank wall approximately 20 feet by eight feet in size.

Underhill, 30, said they explored the idea of transformation and collaboration using their hands to create the mural they call *Our Hands Made This*.

It was fitting, she said, noting how STRIDE

clients work a lot with their hands all day long.

"They're here for workplace training and employment opportunities and it's sort of an opportunity to turn around their lives so we wanted to pay tribute to that by looking at that transformation through the mural," added Underhill.

She described how the children traced their hand on paper, cut out the pattern and arranged them to create a design. They were taken to the Oakville Galleries exhibit too, to provide them with inspiration, she said.

Underhill, along with Gomboc and Turriff, put the finishing touches on the wall, painting the symbols and cutouts the student made.

Mark Cox, STRIDE's south Halton manager, said staff and clients are pleased with the results.

"We're very happy with it," he said, noting how it reflects a collaboration of the community.

He said the bistro, which officially opened November 2013, is a place for their clients to take a break from their job.

The new space, he added, looks complete with the mural now finished.

Underhill said she's hoping everyone involved in the project feels validated by their efforts and recognizes how special and important their creative work is.

"I feel that the arts in daily life can be marginalized and this project is an exception to that," she said.

## Free counselling service at CMHA Halton

The Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch (CMHA HRB) is now offering free drop-in counselling services at its Oakville head office.

Counsellors provide one-on-one counselling to help people cope with emotions and challenges, improve wellness and connect with others who can help, stated a news release.

"Sometimes, people feel 'stuck' and don't know where to turn for support," Radhika Subramanyan, CEO of CMHA HRB, said in the release. "If you're feeling down, stressed, worried or having trouble coping in any way, we can help you improve your well-being."

Counsellors are trained in solution-focused brief counselling, crisis intervention, family

violence and suicide-prevention counselling.

"They can talk with people about a wide range of concerns, including relationships, family violence, depression, anxiety, anger, sexuality and sexual orientation, childhood abuse, grief and loss, life changes, self-esteem, alcohol and drug-use, gambling, parenting issues, suicidal thoughts, and any other problem that may be affecting their lives," stated the release.

The counselling service is available to anyone aged 16 or older, every Wednesday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the 1540 Cornwall Rd., unit 102, centre.

Clients are seen on a first come, first served basis and no appointment is necessary. For more information, visit [www.halton.cmha.ca](http://www.halton.cmha.ca).

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