Drive-By Art aims to beautify Salt Lake neighborhood

By Whitney Evans, Deseret News

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Heneli "Henry" Kaufusi, left, and Siaosi Fale hang Kaufusi's art work as part of the Drive-By Art project on 400 South and 500 West in Salt Lake City on Friday, Aug. 1, 2014.

Laura Seitz, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — If you pass by the abandoned
If you pass by the abandoned building on the northwest corner of 400 South and 500 West, you might see a woman peering out the window of a red door and waving.

Or at least that's how it appears.

The photograph is part of a partnership working to enliven the buildings with vinyl prints of artwork created by those who live or work on the west side of the city, in addition to a handful of pieces made by students at Washington Elementary School.

Friday morning found a handful of people hanging vinyl prints of the 15 pieces over boarded-up windows and doors.

Drive-By Art is part of a joint effort by Heneli "Henry" Kaufusi, graphic designer and founder of LOA Clothing, and Sheryl Gillilan, executive director of Art Access, a nonprofit organization that aims to bring art to everyone in the community.

"If they're not going to come to us, we'll go to them," Gillilan said.

Just beyond the building, the open trunk of a silver midsize Honda parked nearby displayed the motto of Art Access: "Art is for everyone."

Gillilan and Kaufusi met almost a year earlier and discovered a mutual interest in beautifying vacant buildings on the west side of the city.

Their proposal was to cover the windows of a building with a 10-foot...
of vacant buildings with vinyl pieces of art created by local artists.

In order to receive one of their funding grants, Art Access needed to demonstrate community support, so Gillilan rallied a group to host a honk and wave and submitted a video of their efforts as proof of the community's excitement. The nonprofit ultimately received a $2,000 grant from Salt Lake City Corp. Community Improvement and Outreach and $1,000 from the Utah Division of Arts and Museums.

Selected artists had from January to March to complete their pieces.

Artists were instructed to create works that would either be a reflection of what could be going on inside the building or a view of the inside looking outward.

"Basically (we're) just trying to shine a little bit more light on the local talent that we have here in Salt Lake," Kaufusi said.

They chose the building because of its proximity to Art Access and because Gillilan sees it as a bridge between the east and west sides of the city.

"This building is like the gateway to the west side," she said. "It is the art entry as opposed to an abandoned building entry."

On the northeast side of the building are four vinyls representing elementary-age children's interpretations of thriving. Select works from second- and sixth-graders at Washington Elementary were taken from the Art Access gallery for this section.

Drive-By Art is one of Gillilan's efforts "to create an art district" in the neighborhood and show the community
that people enjoy living and working in the neighborhood.

A red brick building next door boasts a mural on its east side, and farther to the north, Art Access has created a tile mural with help from local children and sponsorship from the Utah Jazz and AT&T.

If Gillilan and Kaufusi have things their way, this will be the first of many beautifying efforts in Salt Lake City.

The name Drive-By Art represents three things, Gillilan said. First, it will create a positive association with a term usually linked to crime. Second, it describes the experience that many commuters will have as they drive past the building. Finally, it shows that the project is driven by creativity within the community.

"(Art) makes a big difference," Gillilan said.

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