Want to paint Angie’s?
Take ‘pART’ in community mural project | Journalism

01/22/2014
January 22, 2014

By Noelle Johansen

LOGAN—Many bumperstickers around Cache Valley brag, "I cleaned the sink at Angie’s." This spring, 12 local artists will be able to brag, "I painted the wall at Angie’s."

Last October, Logan City Planning and Commission approved unanimously a design review permit for Matt Vance, student in business administration at Utah State University, and Saboor Sahely, founder and owner of Angie’s Restaurant at Main Street and 700 North, in preparation for a painted mural on the local landmark’s north-facing wall. The mural must be an artistic endeavor and not advertisement for Angie’s, as Logan City sign code restricts commercial advertisements to only 10 percent of any given wall or space they occupy. The final design will be approved by Logan City Community Development Director Mike Desimone.

With the city’s support, the Angie’s mural art contest began accepting submissions from artists age 12 and up in November. The theme is “people, places and times of Cache Valley,” and the contest is split into four age groups. Three winners from each age group will be selected by a half-public, half-jury vote to paint the mural.

Matt Vance said only a handful of artists have submitted artwork as of mid-January. His wife, Crista Vance, a USU student studying family finance, said she expects late entries to appear before the Jan. 24 deadline.

“We were thinking we were pessimistic, but we were actually being really optimistic is what we’ve now realized,” Crista said. “We thought we’d have no problem getting 50 entries. We were hoping for even more than that.”

Crista did all the research for paint prices and city zoning restrictions, Matt said, while he organized the logistics as a group project in a business class at USU during the fall 2013 semester. The required $15 contest entry fee was meant to pay for the winners’ cash prizes and raffle tickets for the rest of the participants. But with few artists entering, the promised prizes will come from the Vances’ pockets, Matt said.

“We definitely don’t regret it even if we don’t come out making money or even if we don’t break even,” Crista said. “It’s definitely been a good experience and will teach us for whatever future projects or businesses that we do.”

Chuck Landvatter, a USU adjunct professor of painting and drawing, said the biggest reason for lack of participation in the contest is the lack of communication, followed by the demographics of Cache Valley.

“We’re a rural community and a lot of the student body is populated largely from rural towns,” Landvatter said, “not really urban-minded artists.” He said that he is, however, enthusiastic about the idea.

“I would love to endorse this in any way and I would love to see more of this happen,” Landvatter said. “I tip my hat to the Vances and to Angie’s for putting something like this together.”

Landvatter said he sometimes paints murals, and participated in a collaborative project for the Salt Lake Running Company in 2010. He said he charges anywhere from $3,000 to $10,000, depending on the complexity of the mural.
The budget for the Angie’s project is less than $1,000, said Matt. “The paint is coming out of Angie’s budget,” he said. “They took a risk on us to let us do this.”

Sahely said he thought the idea was a little crazy when Matt came to him to propose the mural, but “the more we thought about it, the more excited we got.” Sahely said it was not the first time he thought about painting the bare wall facing 700 North.

“There are a lot of talented people,” Sahely said. “You’re looking at university students or high schools or middle schools and so on and so forth. It will be an opportunity to showcase their talent and something unique.”

Crista said Angie’s plate has been too full to paint the wall until now.

“They have been wanting to paint that wall for a long time,” she said. “They’re just so busy with other things they haven’t made it a project of theirs. So we kind of came to them and they were like, ‘Oh great. They can do it for us, they can handle it,’ and hopefully it can be successful enough that at least the mural looks good.”

Sahely said he is excited to see the finished product in April.

“No one in the valley has done something similar to this,” Sahely said. “I thought, why not? The wall is sitting there, wide open.”

Matt’s brother, Spencer, a USU student in art education, said he will paint a subtle nature backdrop to the mural and help plan and organize the winners’ ideas for a cohesive finished work.

“I’m excited about the opportunity because I’m working on a management minor, I’m almost done” Spencer said, “so it’s going to be fun to be able to use the skills I’ve been developing in my education as far as art and management.”

Working with a team of 12 artists of varying ages and levels of experience will require careful collaboration, Spencer said.

“It’s not like 12 independent artists just doing whatever they want,” he said. “It’s the opportunity to collaborate and rub shoulders and work together and learn through teamwork as well as through the actual experience of creating this image for the rest of the valley.”

Spencer, Matt and Crista have been visiting Cache Valley middle schools and high schools to encourage young artists to enter the event. Spencer said he entered contests as a young artist.

“That’s one of the reasons why, when we’ve been talking with the students at the schools, that we went to give them face-to-face encouragement to enter the contest,” he said. “I started out the same way they did, just going to school and entering small contests and getting encouragement from that and being able to recognize that I did have artistic abilities. That basically lead up to me recognizing that talent and having the determination to pursue that and ultimately getting a lot of joy and fulfillment and developing that and helping me learn how to communicate with other people through such a strong medium.”

USU art major Rachel Holladay decided against entering the contest because of the time commitment, despite the $100 first place prize to each age group.

“I think it would be really cool to work on something like that,” she said. “I just didn’t feel personally I had that kind of time while being in school.” She echoed Spencer’s point on the need for collaboration in such a large-scale project.

“Collaboration pieces are really hard because everyone has their own style and you never know how someone else’s work is going to turn out,” Holladay said. “It will be interesting to see how they unify the whole thing.”

Reflecting on his own collaboration in Salt Lake City, Landvatter said it “worked out really well,” although he has mixed feelings about the finished product. “The first thing I see is a really pretty wall that is a success. [But] then, just because I’m critical, I see, ‘I wish I would’ve done that differently,’” Landvatter said.

“Do I think that’ll happen [with the Angie’s mural]? Depends on attitude I guess. My attitude is first, I’m thankful that I was able to do it and that it turned out well, and second, I wish I could’ve done better.”

He said Cache Valley artists should be grateful for the unique opportunity. “I think really the first thing somebody should think after having participated in something like the Angie’s wall is, ‘I feel awesome to have been a part of making this community a little prettier,’” he said. “That’s exhilarating.”

Matt Vance certainly thinks so. “That’s what life is about; taking risks and doing stuff you believe in,” he said. “This is something that we really wanted to do.” And the bragging rights certainly don’t hurt.
“When people will Google Angie’s mural, you know, we can say ‘we did that.’”

For more information on the Angie’s mural art contest email angiesmural@gmail.com or visit the Angie’s Restaurant Facebook event page.

TP