

September 11, 2009

To the Honorable Mayor Dickert and Distinguished City Council Members,
c/o Racine DPW

The University of Wisconsin-Parkside Center for Community Partnerships coordinated a service-learning project involving the Racine County Workforce Development Center (RCWD), Gateway Technical College, Racine Unified School District, and UW-Parkside Arts Department. This project run through RCWD's Welding Boot Camp introduced k-12 students and adult community members learning welding for manufacturing applications to the creative applications of this new skill.

Over the course of 8 weeks, these students were introduced to the creative process and learned from guest speakers the role of art in re-energizing local economies and galvanizing communities. In addition, local artists came in to share their experiences as artists and present their work. A theme, "Higher Expectations" determined by RCWD was presented to the students. These students collectively designed and constructed a sculpture illustrating this theme. The sculpture is on display in the lobby of RCWD.

This pilot project was used to successfully pursue WI Arts Board funding. The model developed will be implemented throughout this academic semester to construct a sculpture destined for public display. Planners have held preliminary discussions with the Parks Department and Department of Public Works to determine a display site along the newly created Root River Pathway. Currently they are exploring the possibility of displaying this sculpture across from the Root River Environmental Education Community Center (REC-1301 West 6th Street), adjacent the Rotary Overlook Pavilion. The aim is to unveil the sculpture in celebration of the 40th anniversary of Earth Day (April 22, 2009).

The theme for this sculpture will be developed by submissions from RUSD 4th graders. The final four selections will be presented to RCWD students for illustration. Preliminary designs will be developed and presented for approval. In keeping with the Earth Day theme, the sculpture will be constructed of found/recycled objects welded into a refined/finish piece.

Planners for this project, currently themed "Community Weld", would like to further introduce this project and follow the appropriate protocol to ensure a successful addition to the Root River Pathway. Please feel free to contact us for more information.

Sincerely,

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