

ASU student engages community in creation of sustainability mural

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If there's one overarching lesson that children's books have taught us, it's that otherwise complex concepts can be simplified through a picture or two. This is the premise of **Adapt & Sustain**, a participatory mural project by fall Arizona State University graduate **Angela Cazal-Jahn**.

As a student in the **Master's in Sustainable Solutions** program offered by ASU's **School of Sustainability**, Cazal-Jahn specialized in communication. Her focus centered on removing barriers to sustainable solutions by improving the public's understanding of sustainability itself.



"Many key terms in the sustainability field have multiple definitions and interpretations," says Cazal-Jahn. "The complexity of sustainability issues sometimes prevents people from even trying to talk about them, let alone solve them."

Cazal-Jahn set out to simplify sustainability concepts and stimulate conversation about them through her applied project – the program's real-world equivalent of a thesis. Guided by her background in studio art, she outlined a plan for a visually and mentally engaging mural created by the community.

"There is a huge overlap between sustainability and the arts when it comes to communication," Cazal-Jahn says. "This is especially true of social practice art, which uses community engagement and collaboration as the medium."

This project was community-powered long before a paint brush touched a wall. Through a series of workshops organized by Cazal-Jahn, students and other locals analyzed core sustainability terms like "adaptation" and "resilience." They then translated these terms into scenarios that could be both depicted in the mural and easily understood by the public.

The location of the mural also reflects **Adapt & Sustain's** communal nature. Cazal-Jahn was introduced to it through a connection between ASU's **Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of**

Sustainability and the Mountain Park Health Center. The institute had assisted Mountain Park with the planning of its latest clinic, constructed in Reinvent Phoenix's **Gateway District**.

Essen Otu is the diversity and community affairs director for Mountain Park Health Center, and serves as Cazal-Jahn's primary liaison for the project.

"When Angela approached us about the mural, we were excited to continue our partnership with the ASU Wrigley Institute in the spirit of community collaboration and transformation," says Otu. "We believe this mural will translate into more community buy-in, less graffiti and vandalism, and ultimately, the trusted community hub that we want this clinic to be."

The Gateway Clinic volunteered a 330-foot stretch of wall appropriately located along the Grand Canal trail, a public recreation destination. Through a series of open painting days, participants from surrounding neighborhoods, schools and organizations worked to transform the wall into a vivid depiction of sustainability.

With the final open painting day slated for Dec. 27, the mural's completion is in sight. Gateway area residents will soon walk, run, bike and rollerblade past the final product, enjoying its vibrancy while considering its underlying sustainability theme.

"The project has entered the best phase," Cazal-Jahn says. "Instead of pushing it along to make it happen, I am now scrambling to keep up with it."

Cazal-Jahn received her master's in sustainable solutions from the School of Sustainability on Dec. 16. She looks forward to advancing sustainability discourse by teaching SOS 110 this spring.