

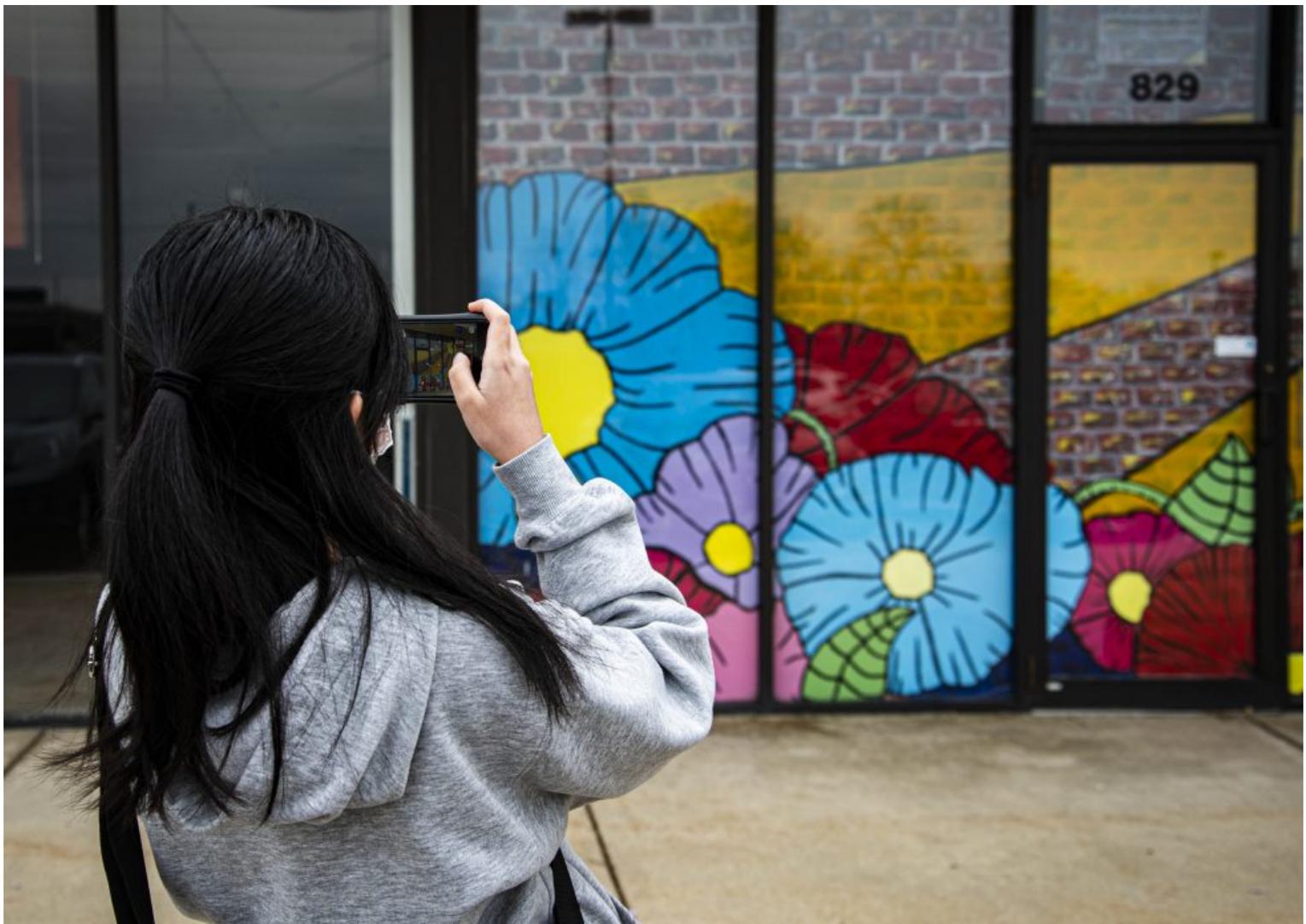
D211 POST: CONANT ART CLUB BEAUTIFIES EMPTY BUSINESS



Laurie Fitzsimmons-Wilkens, co-owner of Dazzles Salon in Roselle, reached out to the James B. Conant Art Club to create an Instagram wall in the empty store front next to her salon.

In September 2020, James B. Conant High School Art Teacher Jamie Peterson was contacted by Dazzles Salon co-owner and Conant Alumna Laurie Fitzsimmons-Wilkens who inquired about working with the school's art club improve the appearance an empty store front beside hers.

"We did not like how the empty room looked next to us," Fitzsimmons-Wilkens said. "We had the idea to create an Instagram wall. My partner Tina, whose daughter goes to Conant, recommended we reach out to the art club."



A student from James B. Conant High School photographs the mural installed by students from the school's Art Club at 829 Roselle Road in Roselle.

In February, the art club began work on a mural which would fill the windows of the neighboring store. The mural was painted in the Conant art classrooms on sections of foam board before being transported to the empty building at 829 Roselle Road in Roselle. Peterson said that she chose this option for a variety of reasons.

“Laurie had asked us to paint the windows, but with the social distancing guidelines and off-site location, we were unable to make that happen,” Peterson said. “I suggested this alternative so that students could easily work on the panels apart and at the school. Some other reasons we chose the panels were that we weren’t relying on daylight, good weather and student transportation.”

She added that by using panels, the mural can be moved if the empty store is occupied at a later date.



James B. Conant High School Freshman Veda Shukla installs a section of the mural painted by the school's art club at 829 Roselle Road in Roselle, Illinois, March 25.

Freshman Veda Shukla said that projects like this have a far-reaching impact.

“I feel that things like this mural are a nice way to clean up the area,” she said. “Every time we do something like this, we contribute to how the community looks as a whole. I think it is a nice way to make everything look a little better.”

Peterson stated that she thought the mural could bring a sense of light into the area.



James B. Conant High School Art Teacher Jamie Peterson installs a pannel of the mural created for the empty shop windows at 829 Roselle Road in Roselle, Illinois.

“As we all know, these are some trying times,” she said. “This mural brings a drop of sunshine in some darkness. You can’t look at it and not feel some happiness, in my opinion.”

After the installation of the mural was complete, Fitzsimmons-Wilkens said she was impressed with how it turned-out.

“It is beyond what I anticipated,” she said. “Maybe people will come out of the salon and use the wall as a photo backdrop.”



The mural installed by students from James B. Conant High School's art club at 829 Roselle Road in Roselle, Illinois

Stylist Mary Nelson from Sycamore, Illinois saw the wall as she arrived at work following the installation and said she was moved by what she saw.

"This really lightens your heart and brightens your day," she said. "It truly shows that there is hope."