

Raising memories with art

Mural decorates nursing home

• By Leigh Wolfe-Dawson

Chief reporter

A farmer sits on a tractor in a field. A farmer and his wife stand nearby. Two children swing. A lake is shown. A child sits on a barrel with geese at her feet. A train is to the right.

This scene is being painted on a wall on the second floor of the Perry Lutheran Home, 2323 E. Willis Ave.

The Lutheran home wanted a mural its residents could interact with and which would be therapeutic.

"We wanted a mural depicting real-life situations that our residents could relate to in their memories," says Deb Hanysh, unit coordinator at the Lutheran home.

The Lutheran home received a grant from Very Special Arts. That grant, coupled with donations, led to the creation of the mural. Dennis Adams, a professional artist from Bouton whose work with murals and students is well-known, was sought.

Adams, a member of the Iowa Arts Council, travels the state helping students convey aspects of their town's history or their views on the world around them in murals that begin with

"We wanted a mural depicting real-life situations that our residents could relate to in their memories"

*Deb Hanysh
Perry Lutheran
Home*

ideas they brainstorm and develop through research.

Adams says the students do most of the work, from sketching out the original design to actually painting the mural. He plays the role of a teacher. He offers directions to the students: how much paint to put on a brush, choosing colors, how to measure, what to paint first. He teaches the students the

process of breaking down the aspects involved in creating a mural so it doesn't seem so overwhelming.

On this night, cloth coverings are taped to the floor. Brown paper is taped to the ceiling, walls and floor. Paint-splattered drop cloths cover tables. Large cans of paint and brushes fill one table. Another table is filled with 8 ounce-size containers of paint.

So far, the mural consists of mostly blue hues, running the gamut from lighter to darker. Five students are busy painting.

Chris Chenoweth, a senior at Perry Community High School, says he is helping paint the mural because he is interested in art. He will enter a commercial art program at the Des Moines Area Community College in the fall.

Quinton Shaffer, an eighth grade student at Perry Middle School, says he is working on the mural because he enjoys art and likes to draw.

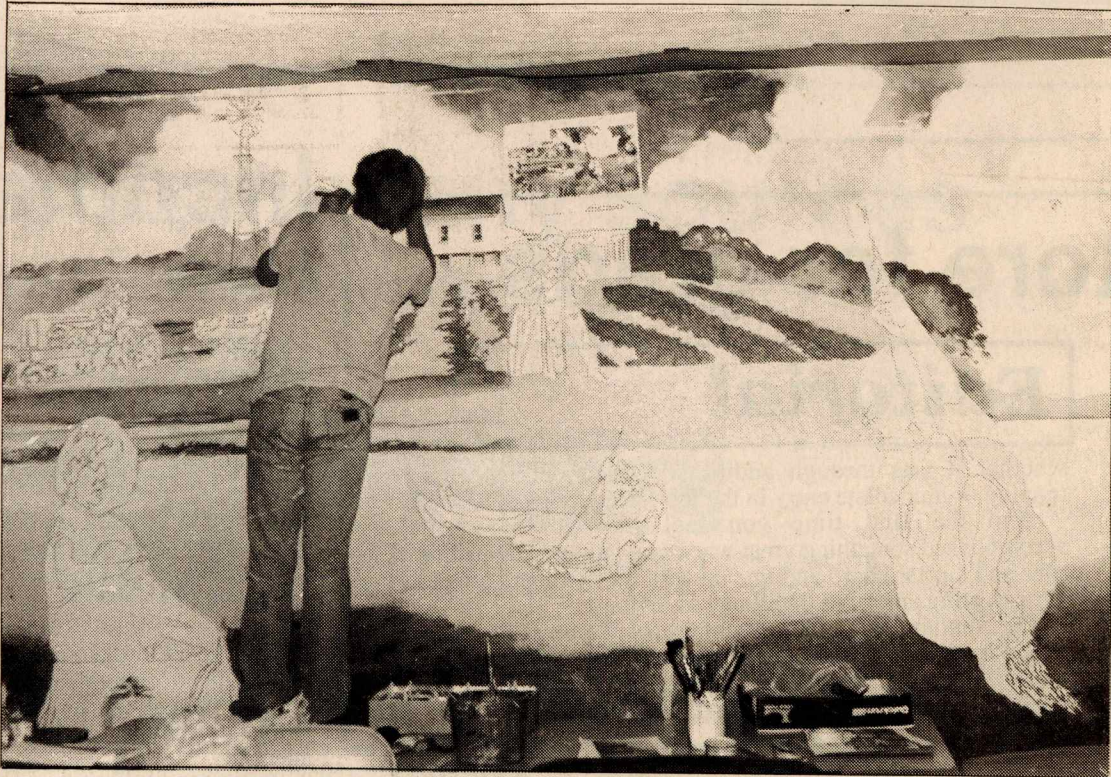
Mike Strand, also an eighth grade student at Perry Middle School, says he is interested in art and feels painting the mural is a great experience.

ideally, my husband and I well-meaning stranger often would income

VERT FILE

Woodward

6-1-95



Dennis Adams, a professional artist from Bouton, paints a mural on the second floor wall of the Perry Lutheran Home.

Jen Netherton, who is home-schooled, works at the Perry Lutheran Home in the mornings. She heard the mural was going to be painted and volunteered to help. The residents here need something more to look at than the street, she explains.

Chad Rohlf, who is also home-schooled, says the most fun part is actually doing the painting. He says he would like a career in art, but doesn't think

he is good enough.

Kris DuVall, of Des Moines, a friend of Adams, says it is fun watching the mural come together. It is quite magical, she says.

Adams' teachings can be seen on the walls of schools in such places as Muscatine and Clinton, where students have addressed racial unrest and the environment in their murals.

When Adams is not involved in teaching others the art of mural painting, he is carrying out his own work with mural paintings in Iowa and South Dakota. His first mural was a historical depiction in downtown Woodward.

Adams, who has been painting almost all of his life, is a graduate of the American Academy of Art in Chicago, Ill. and the University of Iowa.