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In Waverly, messages of inspiration

Artists' sign project 'Text It' enabled residents to express thoughts

By [Julie Scharper](#), The Baltimore Sun

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For months, the wooden sign on a grassy lot in Waverly has sported a new brightly painted message every week. "Believe in Life & Your Purpose in It," one said. "Give Hugs." "Breathe."

advertisement

Since late April, artist Sarah McCann has been painting a word or phrase on the sign each Saturday morning. The greetings were inspired by passers-by, who sent text messages to McCann (she posted her cellphone number), filled out forms or simply shouted suggestions as they walked past the lot on East 33rd Street.

McCann, 31, who lives in nearby Mayfield, said she wanted to give residents a chance to share a message with the larger community. She called the project "Text It."

She was surprised by how attached Waverly neighbors became to the sayings.

"The day I painted over 'Live well,' a guy came by and said, 'I don't know how you can paint over it,'" McCann recalled. "Then he took out his cellphone and showed me pictures of him posing in front of it with all of his grandchildren."

On Saturday, McCann painted the last message on the board, which faces the parking lot of a Giant supermarket. In navy letters on a turquoise field, it proclaims "Love wins."

McCann and friend Graham Coreil-Allen sipped lemonade on the porch of the house next to the lot and greeted friends and neighbors who stopped by to celebrate the end of "Text It."

Coreil-Allen, a professional artist who manages Charm City Cakes, has lived in the brick rowhouse in the 700 block of East 33rd St. for four years. He and his artist roommates host concerts and art shows in the house, which they dubbed "Mirkwood Estates" after a dark forest in the "Lord of the Rings" books.

They gave the name "Tinges Corner" to the vacant lot, owned by the city, in a nod to Tinges Lane, which wound through Waverly when it was a rural neighborhood north of the city. Vestiges of the lane remain,

including a faded sign post that leads to the grocery store parking lot.

Coreil-Allen maintained the lot for years as part of the city's Adopt-A-Lot program but quit after tending it became too time-consuming. He says he has city permission to continue to post art on Tinges Corner and hopes to commission a permanent work of art for the space.

As McCann, wearing paint-daubed shorts and sandals, showed visitors the wooden sign, neighbor Angela Carmichel, walking home from the grocery store, paused to express her fondness for the project.

"I love to read this when I come by," said Carmichel, who lives a block away. "Somebody is going to keep painting this, right? I have a suggestion. You should paint, 'God is good to all people.'"

julie.scharper@baltsun.com

twitter.com/juliemore

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