

# Live Earth is Alive In Laguna Beach

Gearing up for Earth Day in a soon to be proclaimed “Earth Trustee City” was magic today! Driving up the famous Pacific Coast Highway 101 to the “Real Laguna Beach” with Richard one of our Art Miles staff was a great way to start the “official welcome to spring”. The fog and haze simply lifted as we swung as we wound through the ribbons of freeway lanes and onto highway 101 as if knowing that we, like spring were en route.

We arrived at the Montessori School to find the Director--Deepa already unloading her car, and Charles Michael Murray holding his son Oliver in his arms, seemingly unwilling to hand him over or release him from the closeness of their hearts. If you knew them, you would understand the bond and warmth between them, and the copper colored curly headed boy with big brown eyes, seemed to be just fine with that feeling.

The school was quiet and chilled by the morning ocean air, but I could see the clouds above already beginning to thin like a huge sheer panel of a giant stage about to introduce an unbelievable symphony. What an incredible school...in one of California’s loveliest cities with the backdrop of the beautiful surf of the Pacific Ocean.

The symphony came in the form of about 50 laughing and smiling children. Little ones with big eyes. Little ones with lots of hair and rosy cheeks and little ones wearing big shirts. And to our delight there was a gaggle of parents there to “help” and to encourage the little folks to participate in yet another incredible “Earth Day” preparatory event. The paints and tarps and brushes and canvas was laid out there—that ever present large white stretch of blank fabric that would be the stage where a performance about life, about earth was about to unfold.



And so it was, with a basic sketch about the Montessori philosophy of connecting and relating everything to Mother Earth and each other as humans, the children filed out of the classrooms in small groups, wearing their big tee shirts and colorful aprons and began to create the masterpiece of the day. This part of mural magic—the process is always my personal reward—to see the wonder of how

the almost edible colors and textures of paint the children paint upon the canvas brings out that unspoiled and joyful inner innocence among them. They look at the canvas with wonder and forget about the parents and teachers who are watchfully and wistfully wishing they could be part of this

experience. Little do they know how very much they are because it is they, who along with the teachers have taught and encouraged their offspring to let the creativity and spontaneity rise from their little hearts and souls and spill out onto that canvas.



To see them working together and laughing and explaining or describing their creations is incomparable. To hear their expressions and chatter beats all the fanfare and flourish of the politicians who say a lot about nothing. This is where it matters. This is where the children learn about self-confidence,

motor skills, self expression, commonalities, color, shape, design, and building consensus among each other.

And the murals ALWAYS come out beautifully. It doesn't matter if the color in the lines or if a horse is red or a sky is purple...after all, that is how things are or should be in real life! They painted green apples, and golden deserts, blue skies and mountains, and turtles and oceans and trees and all things loved by Mother Nature. To these children and their parents who helped them "finish" and "outline and letter" the mural, this was a demonstration that there is a "Live Earth" right there in Laguna Beach.



Oh, the day was awesome and the children, the parents, the teachers, the weather was awesome and I even forgot to remember that I am supposed to be ill. I was full of joy at their joy. That kind of energy is infectious and after all the images were painted and the handprints stamped onto the colorful border of the Earth Day mural, it was time to pack up and drive back down highway 101. There is

always that moment when I leave any mural event, that I feel rise within my soul...it's a tiny space that gnaws and tugs at my heart that wishes these moments could last forever, and that somehow, if everyone could feel like this or be made to feel like this, there would be an absence of violence indeed.

Normally, my mural story would end right here, but something very profound happened on the way to my car. One of the parents, who had devotedly washed brushes and at least 100 hands, was also readying to leave. I was

admiring his car when he asked if he could ask me a question. He actually pulled the car over and as I looked upon his face, and to “paraphrase” what he said/asked was what I thought of the state of the world. He said that he had never known such a time of violence on our planet, that politics and wars and so many things seemed overwhelming and wrong. There was anguish in his voice and in his eyes and I felt my emotions rise in my throat. That moment of joy I had felt seemed as if it were to disappear and simply vanish into the slight wind that had begun to blow.

But as I glanced over to where the mural lay drying and the chatter of the parents who had gathered and were chattering in wait for their children, I simply explained to him that this was one of the reasons why we do this project. I told him that I didn’t think we could change too many of the older people’s way of thinking and acting, but if children could learn at an early age to respect themselves and each other, we could see peace. Nourishing our souls with kindness, creativity, and communication through painting has no language, religious or ethnic barriers. It is there on the canvas that we all become one human family and it is our commonalities as humans that bind us together. It is sharing and teaching and learning and getting to know one another that makes what “Live Earth” is really all about. I learned something from him today too. I learned that we are not alone in our thinking and that just the fact that he stopped me to ask that question might mean that there are other kindred spirits and even may “older ones” who struggle with these worries about our children. For that I am thankful, for that I know we must continue to create global harmony one mural at a time, one mile at a time.



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