

THE STANDARD TIMES

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\$1.00

Copyright 2021 • Volume 132, No. 21 • 32 pages/4 sections

THE STANDARD TIMES

THURSDAY • MAY 27, 2021

N.K. marks one-year since death of George Floyd Community uses art to honor lost lives

By **ROBERT FORD**
Contributing Writer

NORTH KINGSTOWN

Lead by Providence-based artist Arthur Cayo, children and their parents painted hearts on a mural that will tour schools, and community events marking the one-year anniversary of the death of George Floyd last Sunday.

The mural, which is part of the annual Anti-Racist North Kingstown (TANK) initiative, will remember those who have died in the last year because of racism.

is a well-known artist famous for the murals he has been painting around the town over the last year. He has strongly supported the idea for

the project when he first heard it, saying "hearts and opening them is a good way to get the message across."

Rachel Armentano, former school art teacher and owner of Harbor Creative Arts, was the one who brought Cayo into the project after seeing samples of his work.

"The outpouring of support for TANK, and it's working for racial equality, has been amazing," said Jennifer Lima, TANK founder, and North Kingstown school committee member.

The idea for TANK didn't originate with Lima, but by a group in South Kingstown. "We looked at it and thought it would be a great idea," Lima said.

Not only has the community,

most of the town council and the school committee come out in support of TANK, but the police department is on board as well, she said.

Members of the local BIPOC community have seen and been victims of racial inequality and the hope of this project is to address that in a way that resonates with the hearts of viewers.

Seven-year-old Anthony Hernandez said he came out for the celebration with his parents because he wanted to paint and left saying, "we've learned to treat each other with kindness."

Carlos Hernandez, Anthony's father, and co-founder of TANK said that while individual families

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Anthony Hernandez, 7, adds his heart artwork to be attached to the

Photo

CHANCE TO CELEBRATE | Senate pas

HEARTS, from A1

are talking about racial injustice, there is still more that schools can do.

"It's not addressed as it should be," Carlos Hernandez said.

Superintendent, Phil Auger, who attended the ceremony, agreed that the school needed to do more, which is why DEI (Diversity, Equality, Inclusion), a subcommittee of the school committee, was formed.

"We had more than 60 people attend the first meeting," Auger said.

The subcommittee is looking at the needs of the school population and what can be done. They will be studying the issues and making recommendations on setting policies.

They will also be looking for the blind spots within the district as it pertains to race, Auger said.

Federal funds have come into the district and the administrative staff will be looking into how it can be used for these efforts.

Gia Yarn is a 1994 graduate of North Kingstown High School, member of the BIPOC community and a member of TANK and DEI, said "racial problems are ongoing in the schools. But it goes largely unnoticed because students are reluctant to report it."

"I hope DEI will help change this," she continued.

TANK is still finding its footing, but fortunately the organization did not have to look far for funding and volunteers to help out with the George Floyd/Covid memorial. Residents turned out to volunteer their time, local businesses donated money and local DJs Karen and Greg King spun tunes throughout the day.

At the end of the day, TANK held a candle light vigil for those lost to Covid, and those who were victims of racial injustice.