

Emmaus Borough fire hydrants are dressed to impress

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The good news is applications for the 2019 Emmaus Paint-A-Hydrant Program continue to be accepted.

The better news is 10 fire hydrants are completed and brightening downtown Emmaus. The public arts project is the work of the Emmaus Arts Commission in partnership with the Borough of Emmaus and the Emmaus Fire Department, according to the Emmaus Arts Commission website.

Tara M. Santoro, treasurer of the Emmaus Arts Commission, said response has been strong from artists and residents. "We're always open to applications," Santoro said by phone June 26.

In an email to The Press, Emmaus Borough Manager Shane Pepe wrote, "The response has been overwhelmingly positive," adding, "we have received a lot of positive feedback from people who are walking downtown just to see the hydrants and their designs."

Artistic interpretations of a hot air balloon, rocket ship, ice cream cone and Emmaus borough history are displayed on the finished hydrants along Main/Chestnut Street, the central thoroughfare of Emmaus.

Early concerns about the project expressed by residents and others were addressed by the Emmaus Arts Commission online. For example, organizers noted online "It is not illegal to paint a fire hydrant" and "a very specific paint" chosen by Emmaus Fire Department officials was used to paint the hydrants. Emmaus Public Works crews painted each hydrant with primer before artists started work on their designs.

"There were concerns about the legality of painting the hydrants. It's perfectly legal, as it's a program sponsored by the (Emmaus) Arts Commission, approved through (Emmaus) Borough Council and endorsed by our fire chief," Pepe stated by email. Emmaus Fire Chief John Price also has had input on designs and colors used.

An application process requires artists 18 years old or older to provide drawings and descriptions of their designs for hydrants as well as examples of their original artwork. Organizers required all designs for the hydrants to be original and not obscure visibility of the hydrants for firefighters. All of the painted hydrants are working hydrants.

The original deadline for applications was April 15 with a kickoff event May 18. The goal of the project is to paint all 400 hydrants in Emmaus borough, Santoro said. Plans are moving forward for 10 additional hydrants to be completed in the fall. The goal is to paint 20 hydrants per year, Santoro said.

The finished hydrants have garnered plenty of interest, much of it positive, according to Pepe. "We are receiving a lot of requests from citizens to paint the hydrants near their homes. In addition, we have received a lot of positive feedback from people who are walking downtown just to see the hydrants and their designs," Pepe said.

Painting the hydrants presents certain challenges. Artists must work outdoors and use special enamel paints. Their designs must be family friendly and able to withstand weather conditions. And when painting the hydrants safety vests must be worn and precautions are necessary, Santoro said. Three areas are under consideration for the next phases of the project. "Our town looks better and better each week," Santoro said. For information, visit the Emmaus Arts Commission website, emmausarts.org.



The history of Emmaus is spotlighted in Lindsay Yetter Fujita's hydrant design displayed near Moravian Church, Main and Keystone streets. A Moravian Star interpreted on the dome of the fire hydrant is nod to the early days of the Moravian settlement that arew into the Borouah of Emmaus.



Gayle F. Hendricks uses vines and floral displays in her design for the hydrant at Main and Third streets near Schantz Funeral Home. Gayle F. Hendricks uses vines and floral displays in her design for the hydrant at Main and Third streets near Schantz Funeral Home.



Lisa Macdonald emphasizes diversity in her design for the fire hydrant at Main and Second streets. Her design incorporates hands and flags from around the world.



A camera is the subject of the hydrant titled "Camera Lens" by Jon Nieves. The hydrant by Jon Nieves sits at the corner of Fifth and Chestnut streets in the shadow of St. John's Lutheran Church.



The hot air balloon hydrant designed by Kelly Herbert James stands at Chestnut and 4th Streets.



Artist Tarin Bosh uses bands of color in her design displayed at Main and Broom streets.



A fire hydrant painted by Christine Frobase features an ice cream cone design and is displayed steps from Sweet Memories bakery and café, 180 Main St., Emmaus. The ice cream cone features multi-colored sprinkles, whipped topping and a cherry on top.



Artist Kasandra Brittenburg designed her hydrant to reflect the importance of the railroad industry in Emmaus, incorporating renderings of gears and gauges into her design at Main and Fourth streets. The placement of Brittenburg's design is enhanced by a backdrop of brick.



The group of artists under the name Maltas Con Leche painted the hydrant standing at Main and Short streets near Buss Paints. The Maltas Con Leche design features an intergalactic theme including this rocket ship detail.