



Frankfort-Schuyler

CENTRAL SCHOOL

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For Immediate Release

Valedictorian and Salutatorian Add Artwork to Frankfort-Schuyler Halls

June. 17, 2019 (Frankfort, NY) – A new piece of artwork will soon adorn the halls of Frankfort-Schuyler Jr./Sr. High School, joining a mural “Wall of Fame” created by the school’s most gifted student-artists throughout the years. What sets this year’s mural apart is that it was created by two of the school’s most academically accomplished students -- class of 2019 valedictorian Hope Kara and salutatorian Madison Gage.

While their class rankings make it obvious that Kara and Gage have both excelled in subjects that traditionally focus on logic, facts and linear thinking, the pair have also shown their abilities to embrace creativity, imagination and artistic expression.

“These two students are painting on a junior college level,” said high school art teacher Joseph Talerico. “It’s just something they were born with. They’ve always been just wonderful students.”

After witnessing their artistic capabilities countless times throughout their high school careers, Talerico tasked Kara and Gage with creating a mural together as their senior art project.

Starting in September, the students dove full force into planning and creating their culminating work of art. First, reviewing examples of mural work done by famous artists, then cutting, mounting and priming a wooden board which would serve as their canvas and finally, painting their piece. The students worked diligently during their art class periods throughout the school year and added in additional work sessions in their free time to finish the mural before graduation.

Kara and Gage chose to paint a bright, colorful scene, adding light to contrast other dark colored art pieces created by students who came before them. “We wanted it to be sort of ‘springy’ feeling and happy because we knew that it was going to be in the basement, which I feel like can be a little dark and gloomy,” said Gage.

Once completed, the mural, which depicts a stream winding through rolling hills and snow-capped mountains highlighted by clouds in a bright blue and yellow sky, will join several others in the hallway that houses the Jr./Sr. High School’s art, engineering and technology classrooms.

Talerico’s assignment of creating large-scale artwork to be displayed in the students’ own school was intended to inspire future students with the notion that someone their own age could create exceptional art while also providing Kara and Gage with the opportunity to exercise their talents on an advanced level.

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“They’ll say to me ‘it’s a lot of work,’ and I tell them ‘look, yes it is, but when you find someone that has exceptional ability in anything, if you don’t raise the bar then I don’t think you’re being a good teacher.’”

Although working on a project of this magnitude has certainly had its stressful and challenging moments, creating the mural has grown to be a relaxing endeavor for Kara and Gage as they approach their last days of high school.

“We spent a long time on the sky and kept redoing it because we didn’t like how it looked and then we didn’t have enough time left, so it got a little stressful -- it still kind of is!” remarked Kara. “We’ve only got a couple days left of school and we’re trying to finish it. But after a few minutes when you get started and then Mr. Talerico puts the music on, you get into the mood and you’re only focused on painting instead of all the other school stuff.”

“It did get pretty stressful because we’re only in class every other day and we’ve had to try to find time to finish it,” agreed Gage. “But for the most part, it’s been really enjoyable the whole time!”

While neither student plans to pursue art full-time next year – Kara will attend the University at Buffalo for computer science and Gage will attend MVCC for general studies – they both plan to continue exercising their artistic sides in their free time, something that Talerico recommends to everyone.

“A lot of students have come back to me and no matter what field they went into, even if it wasn’t art, they find themselves eventually going back to it. I think it’s because everyone needs that outlet for expression. You have a job to do and now you’ve got to do all of this stuff, and I tell young people all the time, there has to be something in your life that gives you that break from the everyday routine.”

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Pictured (left to right): Frankfort-Schuyler Jr./Sr. High School class of 2019 valedictorian Hope Kara and salutatorian Madison Gage pose with their senior art project mural in the school’s art classroom.

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