

## Recycled bottle caps become mural at Urban Pathways K-5

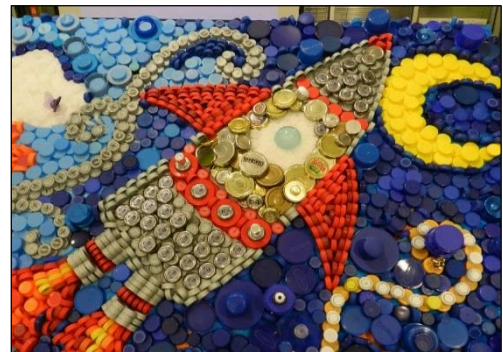
Thousands of colorful bottle caps donated by Department of Human Services staff to a drive initiated by [AmeriCorps KEYS Service Corps](#) are now part of a large artwork at Urban Pathways Charter School K-5 in the Downtown Cultural District.

KEYS member Keisha West, who works with the school's kindergartners, hit upon the idea for the mural while planning her service project for KEYS. Bottle cap artwork hit the mark.

"I wanted to do something that everyone would appreciate and makes them feel good, and that has a strong meaning for the children," Keisha said.



**Above,** AmeriCorps KEYS member Keisha West, left, and Urban Pathways K-5 art teacher Jessi Mitchell with the mural made of donated bottle caps. The mural is on display in the school's front window. **Right,** a close up of the artwork.



The project began with drawings that the kindergartners had made prior to working on the mural. Using the drawings as inspiration, art teacher Jessi Mitchell sketched out a final design on a piece of plywood and the students, with Jessi and Keisha's assistance, colored the sketch to use as a guide while gluing.

Meanwhile, thousands of bottle caps were pouring to collection sites. Not only did DHS staff at the Human Services Building, Downtown, and at regional offices make a large contribution, but Kenneth Lee, manager of Sneaker Villa, Downtown, collected caps at his store. He had worked with a KEYS service project on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the Homewood YMCA and learned about the bottle cap drive. Staff and students at Urban Pathways also chipped in.

"I was given bottle caps everywhere," Keisha said. The mural also incorporates lids from jars.

Another KEYS member, Kevin Nguyen, who serves at Urban Pathways Charter School 6-12, named the artwork "Reaching for the Sky," noting the piece has literal and symbolic interpretations. Not only are its flowers and the rocket projecting upward, but they might inspire students to know that "the sky is the limit and your options are limitless. With enough effort, you can do just about anything," Kevin said.

Emily McMahon, an art teacher at the 6-12 school who supervises KEYS members at both schools and who served with KEYS at Urban Pathways, said the mural also imparts the important message of recycling. "The kids right now are talking about recycling as part of their curriculum, so they have an example in their own lives," Jessi added.

The mural was posted in the sidewalk-level window of the school on Penn Avenue, where visitors to the Downtown Gallery Crawl on April 22 could view it. It remains in the window for now but will eventually have a permanent home in the school.