



Bridgeport Exempted Village School District

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Bridgeport High School senior Voni Smith's original design accentuates the new student section in the school gym. Seating was switched for home and visitors and officials said the artwork encompasses school activities and celebrates student achievements. Smith completed the rendering in time for fall sports games.

Student Creates Mural for BHS Gym

BRIDGEPORT- The home seating section in the Bridgeport High School gym has a new spot and look to celebrate students' accomplishments in sports.

Senior Voni Smith recently completed a 13-foot-by-4-foot mural in the student section complete with school colors and silhouettes highlighting sports and extracurricular activities in football, cheerleading, band, basketball, volleyball, bowling, baseball and softball, golf, wrestling and cross country. Smith finished his rendering in late August and said he was excited to put his abilities on display.

"There was a desire to switch the home and visitors' sections and Mr. Ripley wanted me to paint something on the other side of the gymnasium to showcase our student section," he said, adding that he made his presentation to the board in June.

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Smith, the son of Mari Harrison of Bridgeport, said he was inspired by his aunt, Jen Knight, who told him to keep it simple.

“She gave me the idea. I wanted to do something over the top, but she said to go for something basic that speaks ‘student section.’ It represents all of the sports we have at Bridgeport and I was doing conceptual art and found sports photos online, then made them into silhouettes in blue and black blocks to include the school colors.”

He worked on the mural twice a week and said he likes having his creation on the gym wall for everyone to see.

Smith has been drawing since he was a second-grader and hopes to continue his studies in art or graphics following graduation. He had another chance to show off his skills when he attended a pre-college architecture program at Carnegie Mellon University in July. He said school guidance counselor Vicki Falcone mentioned the event and he was one of 52 teens who attended.

“I wanted to do something for the summer and it was actually fun. I stayed on campus July 1-29 and it was all traditional with some digital,” he said, adding that he worked with professors, architects and artists. “It was fun working with materials.

His talents continue in the classroom and he holds a 4.0 grade point average, plus he has been active in the art club, Interact and Staying Clean while he also assists with the video board during volleyball and basketball games.

Superintendent Brent Ripley praised Smith’s artistic talents and said it was exciting to have one of Bridgeport’s own do the project, and he said there may be plans to put the mural design on T-shirts as a fundraiser in the future.

“Not every student is as exceptional as Voni is. He is tremendously talented and creative and we recognized that,” Ripley said. “I reached out to him because I wanted to do something where the students could have ownership...and would encompass all of the sports and extracurricular activities at Bridgeport that use our gymnasium so every student has an identity as part of the student section. He came up with a few designs and prepared ideas for the board to give feedback. This was a great project to showcase the talent of that one-of-a-kind student.”