

## **`Tee up' with the Assistance League of Covina Valley**

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### **Art project adds color to beaches, lives**

The psychedelic `60s are over, but "Flower Power" is making a comeback this summer at local beaches.

Lifeguard towers along Los Angeles County's famed beaches will be transformed from a sun-washed shade of blue to a Technicolor explosion of flowers, geometric shapes and aquatic-themed designs.

"People have never seen anything quite like this before," said Ed Massey, co-founder of Portraits of Hope, a nonprofit arts and education group spearheading the public art display known as "Summer of Color - Lifeguard Towers of Los Angeles."

"As beautiful and majestic as our Pacific Coast and sandy beaches are ... this is going to be a magnificent addition of artwork done by thousands of children - many of whom would never have access to those sandy coastlines because of their physical conditions."

In the largest public art project in the United States, the 158 legendary beach towers along 31 miles of the nation's most recognized coastline will come to life in vivid designs and colors - capturing the attention of the 45 million people who visit county beaches each year.

"Portraits of Hope uses visual dramatics - such as flowers - as a symbol of hope, beauty and joy," said Bernie Massey, co-founder of the Santa Monica-based organization. "It's a symbol that transcends cultures and resonates with any population group. We are also introducing an aquatic theme on 26 towers. It's going to be very vibrant, very lively and something all Angelenos and visitors are going to be taken with."

In recent months, more than 8,000 youths and adults from schools, hospitals and social services programs have hand-painted the designs onto form-fitting art panels.

"It's just a magical experience for everyone involved," said Kerry Silverstrom, spokeswoman for the Department of Harbors and Beaches.

Carole Firestone, a teacher at Lindero Canyon Middle School in Agoura Hills, said about 40 students and their parents went on a field trip to paint the panels last month and had an "absolutely fabulous" time.

"The kids absolutely loved it," Firestone said. "They are still talking about it."

Sometime between May 10-15, the two-and-a-half week process will begin to install the panels

on the four-sided towers and their roof tops along county beaches, including Zuma, Malibu, Santa Monica, Venice, Marina del Rey, Playa del Rey, Manhattan and Hermosa. During this time, about 1,500 volunteers will spend the day painting the tower rails too.

"This is an effort to utilize these towers in an artistically creative way, bringing life to the beaches," county Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said. "They won't be your traditional pale blue lifeguard tower, but will be easily identifiable, which is a good thing from a public safety standpoint."

The brainchild of the Massey brothers, the privately funded project has involved tens of thousands of children and adults in huge civic art projects in the U.S. and overseas that have strikingly transformed everything from airplanes, buildings and the New York City taxi fleet to blimps, tugboats and NASCAR race cars.

The program serves as creative therapy for thousands of children.

The organization has provided children and adults facing cancer, burn trauma, spinal injuries, HIV/AIDS, head and brain injuries and other serious medical problems with innovative, fun and therapeutic activities that let them enjoy and take pride in themselves during their medical care and rehabilitation.

The organization has developed special brushes for children and adults with physical disabilities, including telescope brushes for those in wheelchairs or attached to IVs, shoe brushes for people unable to manipulate a brush with their hands, and fruit-flavored mouth brushes for children and adults with limited movement of their limbs.

When the exhibition ends in October, the panels will be donated to shelters, hospitals and senior centers and shipped to Haiti for transitional homes. For more information, log onto [www.portraitsofhope.org](http://www.portraitsofhope.org).

"It was very exciting to be a part of something like this and something that is going to be seen so much," said Agoura Hills resident Otto Jursch, 12, a seventh-grader at Lindero Canyon Middle School. "I just think it's a really great program, especially because they have a lot of kids who have illnesses and injuries in the hospitals who are participating."

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