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Washington Village moves forward with kids' art removal and preservation

Boulder, CO – The Washington Village cohousing community announces the removal and preservation of the former Washington Elementary School kids' artwork. When Wonderland Hill Development Company purchased the former Washington Elementary School site in April 2008, it committed to preserving the student art that was displayed throughout the historic school. The history of this school is rich with stories as an elementary school and as the first dual-language immersion school in the Boulder Valley School District.

Wonderland Hill Development Company enlisted the help of Abby Silver of Ceramic Designs. As a ceramic artist, Silver cherished the style of the kids' art and had experience with the installation of large-scale works from creating her own indoor-to-outdoor custom installation designs. Wonderland Hill vice president Steven Toot says, "Silver has a commitment to the intrinsic value of the kids' art and was the logical choice, since she has a great deal of experience with this type of media."

Silver was commissioned to safely remove, access, and document the existing art in the former Washington Elementary School. "I was struck by how worthwhile saving the art was," Silver states. "The art is more valuable than just being kids' artwork. As a ceramic artist, I was impressed by how much clay had been used in the multimedia pieces, especially the mix of paint colors, ceramic tiles, and the use of clay parts. I find the art charming."

Silver recently met with Washington Village members – future residents of the soon-to-be-built cohousing community – and discussed the characteristics of the individual art pieces. She shared her thoughts on what could happen with the preserved art: it could be displayed in the cohousing community or donated to museums or other non-profits. Washington Village members were given the opportunity to view the inspiring artwork and to present their own ideas for reuse of the art. Some of the artwork includes: a quilt, painted murals, ceramic tiles, acrylics on particle board, outdoor ceramic tiles, and a variety of painted terra cotta ceramic pieces. Toot says, "Wonderland Hill Development Company owns the building site and land, but the art truly belongs to the larger Boulder community."

Wonderland Hill Development Company wants to see all the art preserved, whether it's reused on site or donated to an organization that can display it and make it available to the larger community. Wonderland Hill founder Jim Leach states, "We see the art as a point to bring people together to recognize the deep history of the school and the future of the Washington Village community."

Wonderland Hill Development Company invites art lovers, history buffs, and others who are curious about the project to view the art at Washington Elementary School on Saturday, March 20, 2010, from 2 to 4 pm. The school is located at 1215 Cedar Avenue, Boulder, CO 80304. For this special public showing, the art has been removed and clustered and displayed in one classroom on the main level of the school. "The art is amazing," says Silver. "Collectively, you can really see the aesthetic themes of multiculturalism, and the art inspires a respect for the art teachers' commitment to displaying the students' talents." Leach adds, "We are interested in input from the larger art community and hearing from past students and teachers. Perhaps a selection of the art should be placed on display to the public in a local gallery space."

The next chapter of Washington Elementary will be as a cohousing community in the heart of Boulder. Incorporating the historic Washington Elementary School as its centerpiece, its welcoming park-like campus will feature 33 warm and inviting private residences and a large amount of shared common facilities. Beginning in summer 2010, the first phase of the project will include renovating the historic school building into seven high-quality living units plus over 6,000 square feet of common area for the use of the community members. The community is now preselling. For more information, visit www.washington-village.com.

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