

[Print Page](#)

Elephants get paint job

By ROBERT BRYAN

Almost any morning in recent weeks you could stop by the art room at Wabash High School and see students industriously painting their art work - on cement elephants.

It was part of a major project undertaken by art teacher Kim Oswalt and her first period advanced art class, in conjunction with Modoc's Market. The project: Paint eight of Modoc's 200-pound cement elephants with striking color, each reflecting an aspect of the culture and history of Wabash County.

The cement elephants are all in the image of the Great American Circus elephant which escaped handlers here 65-years ago this month and stood off searchers in Wabash and Huntington counties for five days. Media accounts made the incident, the community and the elephant famous.

One of the eight is painted in the image of the original; the other seven are thematic representations of our history and culture: a map of historic sites, education, the Honeywell legacy, agriculture, industry, fine arts, the first electrically lighted city.

The students worked in teams, sharing ideas, plans, and the painting, as, for instance, seniors Aleese Maple and Brooke Holley, who designed the education representation.

The work is being done by the self-motivated art students, the ones who take the class again and again because they like it. A good bit of the elephant work was done in time borrowed elsewhere - after school, lunch period, study hall.

The elephant project, much larger than anything undertaken by the class in previous years, actually originated at the end of last school year when Modoc Market owners Mike and Angie Beauchamp approached Oswalt with the idea.

Said Oswalt, "I thought this would be really neat for the kids to take part in. They're very creative. They really used their imaginations."

Several weeks ago, the students began using color pencil drawings to experiment with thematic visuals.

Then about three weeks ago, the Beauchamps hired people to move the heavy creatures to the school so the actual work by students could begin.

"It's been fun," said Oswalt, "but they take it very seriously."

Like all traditional painter-artists, the students got to put their signatures on their completed work. Those signatures are on the underbelly.

The elephants and their creators were to be photographed at school today, Monday; then the creations are to be shipped to Heartland Career Center, where they will get some weatherproofing through clear-coat baking.

The elephants are to be returned to Modoc's Market in time for the 65th observance there of Modoc's escape, Nov. 11, 1942. (The observance, still being planned, is likely to be Saturday, Nov. 10.)

On Nov. 8, during the lunch break at Wabash High School, Beauchamp is giving a talk on "Modoc - The Legend Lives." Part of the ongoing Artist Lecture Series, it will be in the library, for those who choose to attend.