

Mural celebrates a village's journey into the light.

By Paula Lloyd
The Fresno Bee

Tori Newsome stands in an alley facing a long, white wall. In one hand, she holds a bowl of midnight-blue paint. She has a paintbrush in her other hand.

Working carefully, Newsome dips the brush in the paint and then dabs color around several stars. Up close, the stars look like they're in a night sky. But, from a distance, it's clear the stars are in an American flag.

The flag is just one element in a mural on a block wall near Village of Hope, a community of small sheds at G and Santa Clara streets that provide shelter for homeless people.

The mural was the brainchild of



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A young McGarvin finds his place in the work being done by Sharma.

Village of Hope residents. Now, California State University, Fresno, art instructor Joan Sharma is making their idea a reality.

The mural tells the history of Village of Hope, whose residents

must develop a 90-day plan to find work and a permanent place to live, and Poverello House, which provides meals and a medical and dental clinic for the homeless. The story reads from left to right. Dark colors and images of despair,

hopelessness and broken lives make up the left side. The colors and imagery are brighter on the right.

"Each person has their story of how they got here," Sharma says. "You gradually move into the images of hope."

Newsome, who with a handful of other Village of Hope residents is helping paint the 72-foot-wide mural, is taking a class to prepare for a job in medical billing.

The artwork, she says, "signifies hope. It signifies there is a future. It represents how you start out and the trials and tribulations you go through. There's light at the end of the tunnel. You just have to go through the tunnel."

Work began in July after Sharma sketched the mural's design on the wall at night using an overhead projector. Her design came from drawings done by Village residents and from photographs by Mike McGarvin, Poverello House and Village of Hope founder. Sharma hopes the

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Mural: Painters still finishing work

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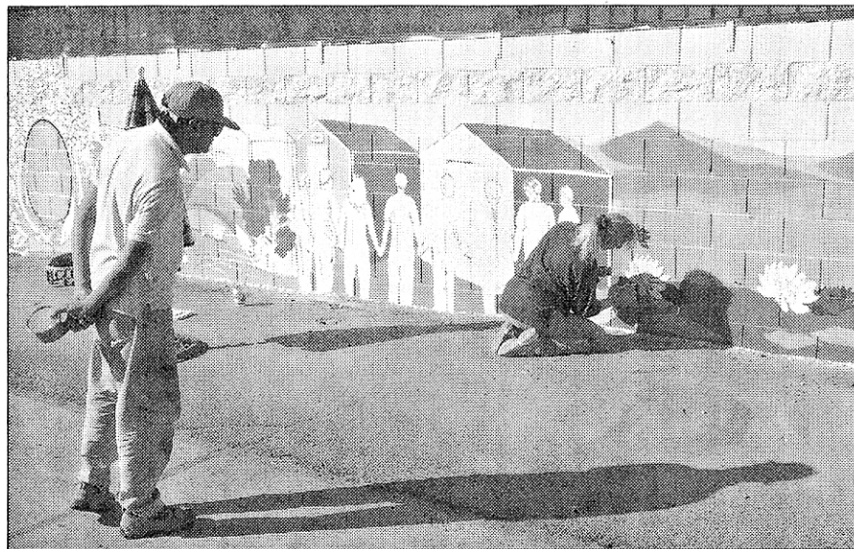
mural will be complete before her classes at Fresno State resume Aug. 22.

Until then, painters will stick to their 7-10 a.m. schedule.

Images include a giant pair of hands making a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich. The hands are McGarvin's. Homeless himself in the 1960s, McGarvin made sandwiches for Fresno's homeless in the early 1970s before he opened Poverello House. The mural covers the wall behind McGarvin's home, which is next to Poverello House on F Street.

Pictures of the tents that made up the original Village of Hope, which McGarvin founded in 2003, also are depicted. In November, small wooden sheds replaced the tents.

Paul Stack, operations director at Poverello House, says people who visit are



Brijesh Sharma watches as Joan Sharma works on a mural that she designed for a wall near the Poverello House.

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surprised to see the mural. "It catches their eye when they turn the corner on G Street. It makes such a difference to put some color down here."

Some images, including the large roses, are symbolic.

"I thought it would be important that there be some

beauty in it," Sharma says. "Hopefully their lives will blossom as they move forward."

At the far end of the mural, Sharma has left room for words from Village residents.

"They will decide what they want," she says. She sifts

through drawings, including one signed "Anthony" that states, "From the darkness of a life without direction, into the light."

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A wall of hope



DIANA BALDRICA/THE FRESNO BEE

Don Vance and Evelyn Breyer of Village of Hope help paint its story.



RICHARD DARBY/THE FRESNO BEE

Poverello founder Mike McGarvin enthusiastically approves of the work being done by artist Joan Sharma on a mural she designed for a wall near Poverello House.