



Joan Sharma's "A Wall of Hope" Mural

Joseph Vasquez / The Collegian

A mural designed to inspire

By Kristen Hoverman
The Collegian

On Aug. 22, Fresno State assistant professor of art and design Joan Sharma completed the Village of Hope Mural near the Poverello House in downtown Fresno.

The 6-foot tall, 70-foot long mural depicts the history of the Poverello House, a place in south Fresno where people can get meals, bathroom facilities and a temporary home for free until they can earn their own wages.

Sharma became interested in the Poverello House in 2004 after reading an article about the Village of Hope, a temporary overnight shelter for homeless people in association with the Poverello House. "It really stuck with me that people were that concerned," Sharma said.

Sharma attended a meeting at Village of Hope, which meets every Thursday at 9:30 p.m. and was invited to work on a creative writing project with the residents. "I made a commitment to show up every week," Sharma said. "I started to get to know the people. I helped

them with their writing, gave them an opportunity to recite their poems and I word processed their resumes."

The residents of the Village of Hope expressed interest in a mural. "I thought this was something I could get involved with," Sharma said.

Sharma incorporated writing and artwork from the residents in her sketches and the residents voted on what they wanted in the mural.

"One of the great beauties was that she expressed what the people wanted expressed," said Dr. Robert Levine professor of psychology and board member of the Poverello House. "It is their mural."

On July 7, Sharma projected the design on the wall. She worked from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. during the week and from 7 a.m. to noon on weekends. "As time went on people from the Village of Hope and people from the street would come up to me and say the most encouraging things," Sharma said.

Many Village of Hope residents helped with

HOPE from on page 6

the painting and Sharma's husband Brijesh Sharma did the calligraphy painting in the mural. "It was a remarkable collaboration to watch," Levine said. "What came out of it is the most remarkable thing of all.

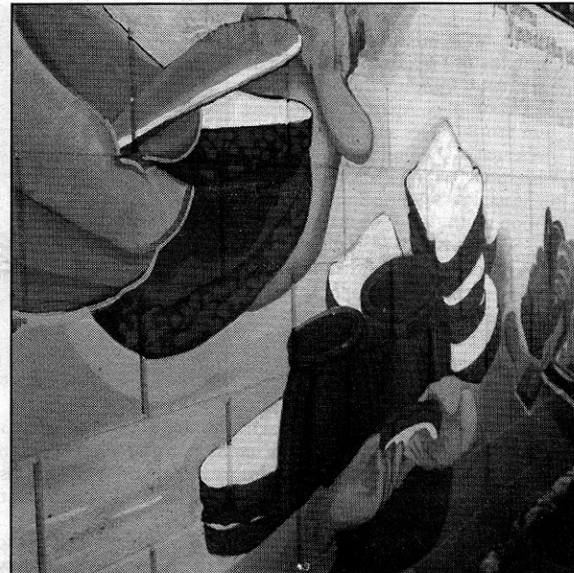
"The mural can easily be seen by volunteers and the neighboring buildings in the area," Levine said. "Within the village and within the staff the response has been fabulous."

Sharma is planning to continue her work with the Village of Hope. "This has been an awesome experience," Sharma said. "This is my way of giving back to the community and paying homage to the hard work of the Poverello House."

"I would like to encourage students to take part in community service programs," Sharma said. "It feels good to give."

Just So You Know:

At the first scheduled Art Hop, Nov. 3, Sharma is exhibiting a scaled reproduction of the mural along with the poems and writing she received from the Village of Hope residents. The mural itself will be unveiled Sept. 30.



See HOPE on page 9