

ART  
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# A whale of a mural

## Local artist joins students on giant project

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LIVE OAK — It's not often you can get students to hang around after school. Normally the 3 o'clock bell rings and they're gone.

But a group of 10 to 15 Del Mar Middle School students is regularly staying after school lately. Not just hanging around, mind you. They're working on a mural, which is being painted as part of the school's 25-year anniversary.

Working through the Santa Cruz County Parents Association's voucher project, the mural project is being funded in part by an \$8,000 grant from the California Arts Council. Local artist John Johnstone, who worked on a similar mural with Soquel Elementary School students three years ago, has been commissioned to work with Del Mar students this time around.

Right now, the students are working on a "practice" 4-x-8-foot painting. The actual mural will depict a lifesize humpback whale. It will cover a wall 16 feet high and 55 feet long.

"The kids have been very self-conscious about making large strokes on paper," says Johnstone. "Basically, I'm trying to

loosen them up now. They don't have to be cautious when working with something that's going to be this big."

The volunteer artists are getting their strokes down, as well as the anatomy of whales, their coloring and configurations.

"It's exciting to think that the mural is going to be so big once it's all done," says seventh-grader Tim Merrill. Adds fellow student Molly Stack: "I'm excited because it's something everybody will see. Everybody will be able to appreciate the mural and it'll be something we can all share."

While painting is new to Marnie Coleman, she volunteered since a friend was working on it. "I'm learning how to mix different paints and the basic skills about painting and drawing," she says.

According to Jane Bonham, services coordinator for the sponsoring Santa Cruz Parents Association, the mural is the first such project they've been involved in.

"Our major force involves administering money for child care," she says. "This project, being an after-school project, serves as an activity that provides creative expression."