

Pole painting sweeps Fernwood



Pepito Pais paints a telephone pole outside George Jay elementary school last summer.

Don Denton/News staff

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It started with a simple fix to beautify defaced telephone polls on her street.

“They were just completely signature tagged, and it brought the whole street down, I felt,” said Beth Threlfall, of Fernwood Avenue.

She phoned a B.C. Hydro representative seeking permission to paint the poles.

“He was all about it,” she said.

Thelfall started with the pole in front of her house.

She chose a sunflower theme, and the response was tremendous. “I got honks and cheers,” she said.

Soon she was painting her neighbours’ poles, organizing a pole-painting project at her children’s school, and even got a paid contract by a local business in Quadra Village.

Now, she has inspired the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group, which is opening up the idea to all aspiring pole artists.

Organizer Mila Czemerzys said she's preparing for about 150 people, and will have 100 poles primed for the big event Saturday (May 28).

It includes a band, Compassion Guerilla, and a barbecue sponsored by the Telus Day of Giving. Some paint has been donated, while she's picked up many cans for free at the Hartland Landfill's paint recycling centre.

Everyone is welcome, Czemerzys said, adding some graffiti artists have been invited to take part.

The instructions are simple. "Go bold and simple with really bright colours."

Threlfall will also take part.

She likes to keep her designs simple so she can easily repaint them when taggers scrawl their initials over top of her paintings. Unlike graffiti artists, some taggers have no ethics, she explained, adding houses and fences are still getting tagged.

"(The pole painting project) hasn't helped with the problem on our street ... but you notice the poles more than you notice the tags."

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