

# Final Hazelwood ‘Play Stop’ in Food Series Embodies ‘Feeding’ the Community

By Bridget Fertal

What feeds your mind, body, heart and soul? Hazelwood community members were asked this question as a part of the final “play stop” in the food cycle of the Hazelwood Play Trail. Located at the Spartan Community Center of Hazelwood, the play installation includes red benches, a small community garden and a collage of images, each one portraying a community member who has made an impact on Hazelwood.

“Each person was asked to share three words that describe ‘what feeds your mind, body, heart and/or soul?’ or words that describe their belonging/involvement in Hazelwood,” Sarah Siplak, former director of the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative, explained. Many of the individuals pictured have a presence in the Spartan Center as well through one of the many community events, afterschool programs, community programs and non-profits housed inside. The Spartan Community Center is “a place where the community comes together to share food,” Siplak said. “The original hope was for the plants to be a mini community garden that people could harvest if they like,” she continued.

The Neighborhood Play Stops Project was part of the KaBOOM! Play Everywhere Challenge. The Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative (an initiative of Trying Together) received the grant in 2018 and partnered with Edith Abeyta of Arts Excursions Unlimited and Dylan Rooke, a local community activist and artist, to help lead the work. “We found three different places that were willing to let us to “deface” or “beautify” their spaces in fun creative ways,” Rooke explained in an interview with Arts Excursions Unlimited. “We’re trying to connect the community to the ways it intersects with food.”

Rooke and Abeyta, along with a team of helpers from the community, rebuilt the old benches, mounted the images, planted the garden and painted the pavement, marking the distinction between the “play stop” and the parking lot. “Working with Arts Excursions Unlimited and Edith this past year has been awesome, partly because it’s in my neighborhood and the spaces I intersect with regularly,” Rooke said in the interview. Abeyta expressed her

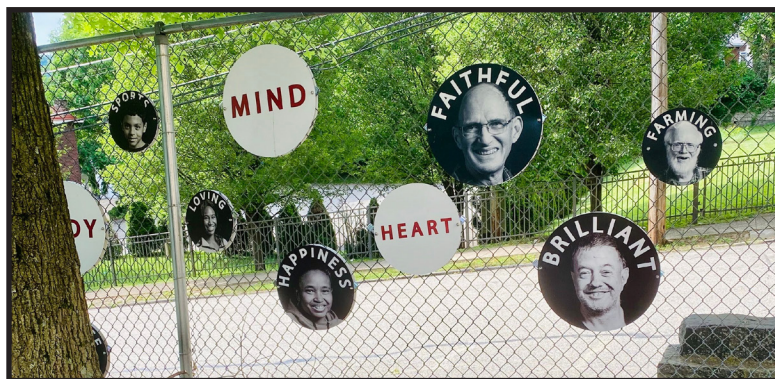
love for making art out in the community, explaining that the process “always engages people/passersby” who share stories, tips, history and give feedback.

This play stop is an extension of the Hazelwood Play Trail, a series of installations created to highlight the importance of play in communities. The Spartan Center play stop is the end of the food cycle of the trail, which includes the Hazelwood Community Garden, where food is grown; Dylamato’s Market, where food is distributed; and the Spartan Center, where food is shared. Siplak explained many community members were included in the project throughout its course, whether through ideas, feedback or labor. “Hazelwood is a neighborhood filled with passionate people who care deeply about their community and each other, and this gathering space brings all of that heart and soul together,” Siplak said.

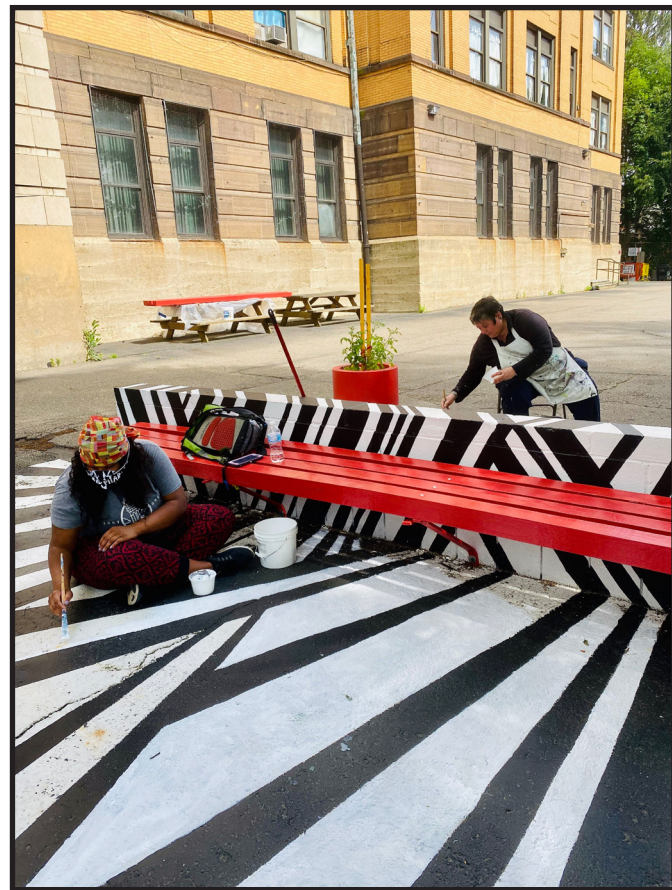
Thank you to the following individuals who helped with the Spartan Center project (in no particular order):

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**Aniya McCoy** - fabrication/installation  
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*Visit the new play stop at the Spartan Community Center of Hazelwood, 134 E Elizabeth St. Pittsburgh, PA 15207. For more information on the programs mentioned in this article, visit their websites: Playful Pittsburgh at [www.playfulpittsburgh.org](http://www.playfulpittsburgh.org); Trying Together at [www.trying-together.org](http://www.trying-together.org); Arts Excursions Unlimited at [www.artsexcursionsunlimited.com](http://www.artsexcursionsunlimited.com); and KABOOM! At [www.kaboom.org](http://www.kaboom.org).*



Photos by Bridget Fertal



Marcé Nixon Washington and Edith Abeyta applying some finishing touches of paint.

