



A trio of artists (left to right), including Amber Tedhams, an Alma High School student, Chazz Miller, the Detroit artist commissioned to paint the mural entitled “Growing the Arts Together in Alma,” and Amy Wellington, Miller’s friend and collaborator, pose in front of their colorful creation. The project is expected to be completed in full within the next couple of weeks.

## Alma Art Mural More Than Halfway Home

By William Meiners  
Herald Staff Writer

On an August Monday evening suitable for framing, the Alma Art Mural looked to be about halfway done. “Probably more than halfway,” said Amy Wellington, who has been working alongside Chazz Miller, the Detroit artist commissioned for the work.

Last week, community members pitched in, painting portions of the wall you see here. Soon, Miller will be up on scaffold, completing the centerpiece butterfly that will fully transform the alley between a theater and an arts center. Covered in the same paint alongside her mentors, Amber Tedhams, an Alma High School student, has been working with them

for several days. “I’ve been enjoying it a lot,” said Tedhams, who someday hopes to work within the arts.

As if on cue, a passerby shouted out to Miller, who prepped materials for a couple more hours of work as they raced daylight. “Great job!” the man said. “Great job!”

“Thank you,” Miller responded. “It’s going to bring more happiness to Alma,” the man said. “Because every time I drive by, I’m going to look at it and it’s just going to brighten my day. Thank you.”

“Thank you,” said Miller, who quickly stepped about his work.



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## Letters To The Editor

### To The Editor

This letter was sent to both the Alma Planning Commission and the Alma City Commission

I’m writing this in support of the zoning variance for the Warwick Center. I have attended both local meetings about the planned facility for unaccompanied minors which were very informative, though not very heartening.

The sometimes incendiary and often misleading rhetoric by those opposed to the variance surprised and saddened me. Although I have lived in Alma almost all my life, I am unacquainted with the Camelot-like version of our town presented by some of the opponents to the zoning variance. I don’t recall the halcyon days of universal harmony between all political and socio-economic groups referenced in the July 12 meeting of the Planning Commission.

There is and always has been crime, poverty, homelessness, prejudice, and intolerance in Alma, as there is in most places—except perhaps the aforementioned Camelot. That will continue regardless of the zoning decision. The characteristic of this small town that appeals to me is not Alma’s perfection, but its ongoing desire to become better. A cross-section of community stakeholders made that desire the centerpiece of the city’s most recent strategic planning document, “Alma Aspires,” released in January 2020. The first line reads: “Alma aspires to be the best small city within Michigan’s shoreline.”

The document goes on to envision the future of Alma as a “community of choice” with a “family-oriented culture,” and “growing diversity,” capable of “forward-thinking civic action.” That sounds like a place that would welcome Bethany Christian Services, its mission, the children it will serve, and the 50 jobs it will bring to town. It also sounds like a place that would support Masonic Pathways, its responsible management, its contributions to the community, and its economic impact as an organization that employs more than 400 area residents. However, it doesn’t sound like the place where I live after reading and listening to weeks of the uninformed, over-the-top fearmongering from those opposed to the variance request.

The task members of the planning and/or city commission face is quite simple, although given the bullying and the drama that has surrounded the matter, I understand that it is not easy. If the variance request complies with the ordinance governing the issue, then it must be approved.

Susan Hunter  
Alma

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