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May 05, 2011

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Big Kids

Students install sculptures on V&E Greenline.

by [LOUIS GOGGANS](#)



[Bianca Phillips](#)

One of five new sculptures on the V&E Greenline

Runners and cyclists on the V&E Greenline might be encouraged to take a break, thanks to five new sculptures depicting larger-than-life figures lounging on the grass at the urban trail's western end.

Collectively called "Big Kids," the blue figures are shown lying down or sitting on the hill that backs up to North Parkway. The permanent sculptures were unveiled on Saturday, April 30th, in a community party with live music by the Magic Kids.

Big Kids was the brainchild of Rhodes student Graham Smart, who came up with the idea for his public art class.

At the beginning of the spring semester, the Vollintine Evergreen Community Association (VECA) had each student submit proposals for sculptures to be placed on the greenline. Smart's idea was chosen, but all 18 students in the class built the sculptures.

Smart, a 20-year-old studio art and English literature major, said the sculptures reflect the relationship between the Memphis community and the V&E Greenline.

"We thought that it was important to emphasize that the greenline is a community space," Smart said. "It's a place where people can go to relax or exercise. It's a public space, and the idea of these figures is that they're enjoying the public space in the same way the community enjoys it."

Liz Daggett, a member of VECA's greenline committee, said she hopes the sculptures bring the trail more visibility.

"They're colorful and larger than life," Daggett said. "I think people are going to love to get up close to them and get pictures with them. We're excited to see them breathe new life into the western end of the greenline."

The sculptures have a foam interior that's been sanded and coated with a weatherproof spray. Flower planters are carved into the sculptures' heads.

"We hope that people laugh and get a good feeling from looking at them," Smart said. "They're these big, simple figures, and they look like they're relaxing and having a good time."

Rhodes professor Ben Butler, who led the public art class, said the sculpture project presented a different type of challenge to students.

"It was all up to them," Butler said. "They designed the proposals, worked with the committee, and made all of the major decisions. The execution of the sculptures was all theirs. They've totally exceeded my expectations."

Butler said the final proposal was selected six weeks into the semester, and the project took the remaining semester to complete.

The 1.7-mile V&E Greenline, which runs along an abandoned rail line from North Watkins to Springdale, has been in place since 1996. Signage is peppered throughout the greenline, but there is no marker on the trail's western end.

Daggett said the lack of signage is due to lack of funds. The greenline is supported by volunteer dollars: "There's lots of things we would love to do on the greenline, but we're just doing our best to keep it mowed and maintained for everyone."

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The poster is enclosed in a pink border. At the top is a green circle with a white '3' and 'rd' inside. Below this, the text reads 'Thursdays at MAIN PEABODY 5:30 - 'til Thursday, May 19 Live Music'. The 'Live Music' is in a pink, cursive font. Below that, three acts are listed: 'Tom Lenardo & Friends -Jazz-', 'The Blue Infernos -Blues/Soul-', and 'Devil Train -Gypsy Jazz-'. Underneath is the text 'this month's featured business: Pink Pig Apparel' with a pink pig illustration. At the bottom, it says 'by SHELTON CLOTHIERS 147 S. Main (901) 522-9995 www.sheltonclothiers.com'.