

Liz Gray

www.Facebook.com/GrayInnovations

By Ellen Gurley

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Concord has had amazing paintings on buildings and public art just as long as Charlotte. They can keep up with us in the big city. Liz Gray has made sure of that with over twenty murals on the sides of buildings brightening up her community. When I first heard about Liz, I had to meet her. I got a tour of the murals she has done. I learned that many of the buildings with commissioned work are owned by the Troutman family or some of the Hispanic business owners in Gibson Village (which is where it all began). My favourite was a Frida piece at Lupita's (in the heart of it all).

Liz lives in her great grandparent's home; just blocks away from downtown Concord and the neighbouring streets and communities that have so warmly received her art and smile. She says she learned a lot from her grandmother who taught her to take care of herself and her family. This motivated Liz to take over thirty clients in the area and to handle their social media. She pays the bills by and with her roots planted in this area. She wants to be remembered as someone who helped her community, brought traffic to the area and improved business. She doesn't just paint and restore old buildings. She improves lives.

If you wanted to take the same tour that I did there is a mural along the side of the Kimbrell's furniture store (this is of the Troutman ancestors), two on Cabarrus Ave. (McFerson's and Lupita's), and on Kerr Street there are three on the corner of Kerr and Cedar, four on the corner of Academy and Kerr and four on the corner of McGill and Kerr. Some buildings that have hired her have all four sides done. Some she has done as collaborations with other artists. Others were assisted by classes that were done through Rowan Community College.

Next up is a mosaic. This is different from anything she's ever done but she's dying to take a stab at it. I think testing herself was another thing she got from grandma. The mosaic will be three hundred and fifty feet long and five feet high (which is a whole block). Another upcoming mural will be on the greenway in Gibson Village. And yet another will be in Six Sigma, a global consulting group who is moving into a building owned by the Troutmans in

Concord. They have commissioned a large inside mural that will be fully visible from the road; all glass fronts.

Another thing in her genes is activism. Single mother of two half Costa Riccan boys (five and nine), painter and social media whiz, Liz has still found time to volunteer at Planned Parenthood for over fifteen years. She has always been into human rights and local sustainability. While she loves her community, once her kids are grown, she may one day live in South Africa; as her dream is global humanitarian work.

This girl is full of passion. She is fun. She is real. And she is cute. Cute enough to have been a Vavoom 2010 pin-up calendar model and to get hired frequently for other gigs in that arena. Liz was also photographed as a part of the www.OutOfProject.net/11M project, which is a national initiative that the Latin American Coalition brought to Charlotte (with partners) to illustrate that we are all immigrants or descendants thereof. You can see these pictures (the Wall of Poems) on the www.NeighborhoodTheatre.com building and on the William Treloar House (a historical home of an English import) at the corner of 7th and Brevard.

Keep an eye out for Liz. But if you don't, My City will keep you abreast.