



Alton Flyway Mural Dedicated, Earns National Recognition

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Community members gathered downtown on Friday night, Nov. 10, 2023, for the dedication of the Alton Flyway Mural.

The organization [Alton Main Street](#) commissioned the mural, designed by local artist James K. Schmidt. It was painted throughout September by muralist Robert Fishbone and his company [On the Wall Productions](#).

During the dedication ceremony, speakers from Alton Main Street and the Audubon Center at Riverlands talked about the mural's power to call attention to both Alton and the Audubon Center's work toward preserving the bird population.

“One of the four points of the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization is design, and design is basically anything aesthetic,” explained Alton Main Street Executive Director Sara McGibany. “Beautification projects such as public art, that's what gives a town its flavor and its identity. Creating beautiful things for people to see and photo opportunities for people to come and get a snapshot of themselves and downtown Alton, all of these are ways that you just revitalize a neighborhood and appeal to more people to move here and visit here and things like that.”

She added that the mural is one of her favorite projects sponsored by Alton Main Street. The Alton Flyway Mural was officially designated as a National Audubon Mural Project, which is a nationwide arts initiative “to call attention to climate change and the effect it was having on the birds in our country,” McGibany said.

For Fishbone, the muralist, the designation is further proof that there's something special about this piece. Fishbone has completed nearly 200 murals in his career and noted he doesn't always love the finished project, but he likes how the Alton mural is “site-specific” and reflects the town and its people.

“I'm really happy with how this came out. I'm actually a little surprised that I feel so good about it,” he said. “I've been happy with this right from the beginning.”

He added that Penny Schmidt, the artist's daughter, was a big help and made sure the finished project honored her father's art, which Fishbone appreciates.

During the dedication ceremony, students from Principia College's Theater and Dance department performed a dance to Mary Oliver's poem “Snow Geese.” Attendees then gathered inside the Sierra Club for refreshments.

In addition to Alton Main Street and the Audubon Center, the mural was sponsored by the Ruth Arts Foundation, Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau, Pride Incorporated, the Sierra Club, Erie Insurance, the Alton Foundation, Moon Beam Initiatives, Monica and Melvin Bristow and the Mississippi Landing Condominium Association.

