

Artists transform Salvation Army storage bins for shelter fundraiser

Lafayette Bridge Housing Shelter gets a splash of color as local artists get creative

Captivating hand-painted bins lined the outdoor courtyard of [The Salvation Army's Lafayette Bridge Housing Shelter](#) in the Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles, transforming the shared space into a vibrant fundraiser art walk.

Local artists showcased their completed projects as visitors wandered through displays, scanning QR codes with their phones to donate and cast votes for their favorite designs.

"They're all so beautiful, you look at them and forget what they're often used for," said artist and attendee Fae Felician.

Called *Paint the Way Home*, the event raised more than \$7,000 to support the shelter's ongoing operations and services. The decorated bins will remain on site, giving clients safe storage for personal belongings.

The low-barrier shelter, which opened in 2020, houses up to 72 men, women and families, plus their pets. Using repurposed shipping containers, the shelter offers private dorm-style rooms along with access to case management, laundry facilities, meal services and more.





Storage bins arranged in rows at the Lafayette Bridge Housing Shelter in Los Angeles. Photo by John Docter.

Major Lisa Barnes, Salvation Army Divisional Secretary for Metro Los Angeles, said the rooms can accommodate just one locker each, so ensuring sufficient storage for clients is a challenge for the shelter.

When the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts donated more than 30 trash bins, she and the shelter staff saw an opportunity to put them to more meaningful use.

“We didn’t want these bins to just appear as trash containers,” she said. “They’re something people can use daily and we wanted them to be colorful, inspiring and fun.”

She noted that the bins are well-suited for storage, as they are water-resistant, lockable and mobile on wheels.

“We want our guests to know that even in hard times, there is still dignity—they are still human beings, and they deserve beautiful things,” Barnes said.



Lisa Banres welcomes attendees to the Paint the Way Home art walk. Photo by John Docter.

Local artists learned about the project through social media and signed up online to participate. They picked up their bins, gathered their own supplies and had a month to [transform them using their creative expression and style](#).

Los Angeles-based muralist Cecilia Romero said she joined the project to help bring moments of joy to shelter clients.

[“Art has the power to evoke emotions](#) and transform someone’s mood,” Romero said. “I wanted to participate and help make someone’s day just a little bit brighter.”

Her bin showcased a vibrant sunset over the Los Angeles skyline, with a hawk and butterflies soaring above.

Before picking up a brush, she sanded the bin to create a smooth surface. She then outlined her design before filling it with bold blue, pink and yellow hues, working a few hours each day over two weeks to complete the piece.



Cecilia Romero. Photo by John Docter.

“The life flying above Los Angeles represents freedom, hope and new beginnings,” she said. “I want people to look at it and feel empowered to keep their head up and continue to move forward.”

Additional bins featured a lively mix of designs from popular movie and TV characters to intricate patterns and abstract designs.

Los Angeles-based muralist Pauline Hacopian also joined the project, driven by a passion for bringing color and energy to everyday spaces. Her previous work includes painting a city utility box and creating murals for local schools.

“I love seeing art in unexpected places,” Hacopian said. “It brings vibrancy and opens the doors for conversations and connections.”

Her bin featured a peacock surrounded by bold flowers, a piece she titled “Becoming.” She noted that the bin symbolizes the idea that everyone is still growing and improving, no matter their circumstances.

“The piece represents the potential that exists within everyone, even if they may not recognize it yet,” she said.



Attendees chat with artists about the inspiration behind their creations. Photo by John Docter.

As bidding came to a close, the LA Metro Echelon group was announced as the winner for their two bins, which raised over \$1,000 in donations.

The six members participated in one of their first projects as a new Echelon chapter, a network of young professionals committed to supporting The Salvation Army.

One bin they painted featured a space scene, while the other showcased bold, rolling waves over a pink sky.

“We hope the bins help bring a sense of ownership and pride to the residents, to show them that their space and their belongings matter,” said Ulber Ramirez, Events Chair of the LA Metro Echelon Chapter. “Everyone deserves beauty and comfort in their everyday lives.”

Do Good:

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