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Kyle Holbrook, an artist and founder of Moving Lives of Kids murals.

Painting with positivity

For the past month, artists Woffgang Mosaic, Kyle Holbrook, Jamilex Tavares and children of the community have worked on seven Overtown buildings transforming plain walls into works of art, Page 21

OVERTOWN

Artists' murals turn plain walls into emblems of positivity

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Born in Haiti, Woff Senatus moved to Little Haiti when he was 2 years old. His mother and father stayed back on the island, and growing up without them led him down a dark road.

"At 13, I started getting involved with gangs, guns and drugs," said Senatus, 26, better known as the artist Wolfgang Mosaic.

It was in August 2010 when his best friend, Gibson Belizaire, was shot and killed in a gun battle with police that Mosaic re-evaluated his life choices.

"That was my awakening; Gibson and my grandma died in the span of two years," he said. "I realized that there is no tomorrow guaranteed. I knew I wanted to change."

Mosaic turned to art by chance. He was walking by 79th Street in Little Haiti when he saw artist Kyle Holbrook working on a mural.

"It was something magical, and it was going on in my community, something positive," Mosaic said. "My life was moved, I was looking for a transition and this was my way out."

Holbrook is founder of the Moving the Lives of Kids Community Mural Project, a nonprofit group that brings kids from all backgrounds together to enhance their communities through murals.

Mosaic joined Holbrook's MLK cause.

For the past month, Mosaic — alongside Holbrook, Jamilex Tavares and children of the community — has worked on seven Overtown buildings transforming plain walls into works of art.

"I believe in the broken window theory, which states that our environment plays a heavy role in our actions," Holbrook said. "So we are trying to bring color to the neighborhood to break the cycle of inner-city violence."

Originally from Pittsburgh, Holbrook has lived in North Bay Village for the past seven years.

"By participating in the process of creating the murals, the kids can see that there



PHOTOS BY CINDY ARBOLEDA carboleda@miamiherald.com

From left, Louis Wolfson III, Wolfgang Mosaic and Kyle Holbrook check out one of the freshly painted murals for Overtown residents.

is another world out there other than their daily struggles," he said. "Maybe it inspires them to follow art and not become another statistic."

The project was sponsored by Pinnacle Housing Group, Miami-Dade County, the Omni/Overtown CRA, Miami Beverly LLC and TECO energy.

"I've lived my entire life in Miami. Helping the community and children is very

important to me," said philanthropist Louis Wolfson III, a Pinnacle Housing partner, on why he got involved with the project.

Artist Tavares lives in Wynwood, and she said she wants to bring the colorfulness of Wynwood to Overtown.

"Residents have been very positive and welcoming to us, we want to bring a sense of positivity to the neighborhood," Tavares said. Not every resident is content that the

change is only superficial.

Tiranicia Scoop has lived in one of the buildings painted with the murals at 1710 NW First Ct. for four years with her three children.

"I like art, but I wish they would focus on painting the inside of my apartment instead of just the outside," Scoop said. "If they could fix the inside where there are problems, that would be great, you got mold in here."



Artist Jamilex Tavares of Wynwood says she is happy to bring colorful art to her neighbors in Overtown.