

Students to build heritage giants along Route 30

By Paul Paterra
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Giants soon will tower over Route 30.

Students at some of the area's career and technology centers will build roadside giants to help tell the story of the historic highway.

The Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor last week landed a \$49,340 grant from the Community Connections -- Pittsburgh 250 Initiative to enhance the 200-mile Lincoln Highway Roadside Museum stretching from North Huntingdon to Gettysburg.

Vocational-technical high school students in Westmoreland, Somerset and Bedford counties will be commissioned to design their own giants. The project is one of several to pay homage to the nation's first transcontinental highway, conceived in 1912 for the automobile to travel from New York City to San Francisco.

"We're always trying to get a buzz going about the Lincoln Highway," said Olga Herbert, executive director of the Ligonier-based Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor. "It's some of this kind of stuff out there that draws visitors to the area. It's a nice way to involve the community and have students work within a budget."

The initiative, which is honoring Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary, awarded 488 grants of \$5,000, but just 12 regional grants from 230 applications.

Two of the giants will be built in Westmoreland County, with one each in Somerset and Bedford counties.

Herbert said Franklin County wanted to be involved, so that county's visitors' bureau will foot the bill for the construction of a fifth giant.

Students from Central Westmoreland Career and Technology Center have committed to the project, while invitations will be extended to four other centers.

"We'll use a number of our classes," said Clentin Martin, administrative director of the Central Westmoreland Career and Technology Center. "We're in the process of getting together, brainstorming what the actual sculpture will be. We're looking at a couple of ideas."

Commercial arts students will design the structure, welding students will assemble it, building trade students will be responsible for transport and installation and culinary students will bake a super-sized cake to resemble their classmates' giant. A structural engineer will oversee the mechanics and installation of each of the five roadside giants.

Students will select their design from the following categories: vintage vehicle, recognizable historical figure, Lincoln Highway-era figure (such as a gasoline station attendant or diner waitress), vintage bicycle or vintage gas pump.

Herbert hopes to have the project completed by June.

"We have to make history fun for these students. This is something they can really get their arms around," Herbert said. "I think they're going to learn something and they're going to have some fun."

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