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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOMERSET STUDENTS CREATE LASTING ARTWORK THROUGH SAMA RESIDENCY

Somerset – Motorists traveling the Pennsylvania Turnpike through Somerset will be witness to the artistic talents of the region’s youth. Students from Somerset Area High School recently created a mural highlighting favorite local destinations that is on view at the South Somerset Turnpike Plaza. The piece was officially unveiled at a ceremony earlier this month.

The mural was created through the *Art Sparks* program of the PA Turnpike Commission and Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA). The program places student-created murals in turnpike service plazas across the Commonwealth to add beauty and excitement to drivers’ travels while also giving young artists a unique creative opportunity.

For this project, art teacher Kayla Borosky and 12th-grade students worked with Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art (SAMA) teaching artist Martha Murphy to create the mural. Titled *Creative Colors of the Laurel Highlands*, the mixed media mural features local landmarks and celebrations in Somerset and Fayette counties. The piece represents the four seasons and offers scenes of tubing and skiing at Seven Springs, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, biking on covered bridges, and the Somerset County Fair. The mural was created during a 20-day residency.

Murphy said the project provided challenges and rewards for all involved. “We learned to talk, discuss, critique, laugh, persevere, and work hard,” she said. “Things changed every day, and we had to work with those changes, accept what was working and figure out what we could change. The evolution of the piece and our teamwork was truly a transformation. Students gained confidence and found skill levels that were unexpected. Our final result was not just a fine piece of art for the Turnpike; we made friends, found strength in numbers, and many of us gained a better sense of self and achievement.”

The *Art Sparks* program began in the spring of 2017 with students at Dauphin High School creating a mural for the Lawn Service Plaza south of Harrisburg. The second project took place that fall at Riverview Junior/Senior High School to create a mural for the Oakmont Plum Service Plaza. The Somerset mural marked the third *Art Sparks* project.

For more than 20 years, SAMA has been an Arts-in-Education partner of the PCA. Through the partnership, the Museum offers in-school Artist-in-Residence programs that provide local school students with an opportunity to work side-by-side with professional artists. Many such residencies have resulted in special murals and installations at local schools. Now, through the *Art Sparks* program, students have an opportunity to create lasting works of art in high-traffic public spaces. For more information on SAMA's education programs, please call Education Coordinator Jessica Campbell at (814) 472-3920 or visit www.sama-art.org.

To view a photo, video and audio gallery of the mural unveiling at South Somerset Turnpike Plaza, please visit:

<https://www.winstormdp.com/eMercial/view/html5/CMS/PINS/6274/no/Custom>