

**THE JOURNAL NEWS**  
October 5, 2008

## Children's tile art decorates Peekskill trail

By Leah Rae



Teacher and sculptor Jo-Ann Brody points out one of the tiles created by schoolchildren for the Peekskill Public Tile Project. The "Yankee Stadium" tile was placed on Division Street. (Leah Rae/The Journal News)

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A permanent exhibit of children's artwork will soon guide the way through some local history - past former trolley tracks, the McGregor Brook, the old cobblestone streets and the city's new artists' lofts. A mile-and-a-half trail through Peekskill is gradually being delineated by a series of white ceramic tiles painted with images of area landmarks.

The artists, following the tradition of Dutch tile artisans, are schoolchildren from around the Hudson Valley. A first batch of 50 tiles has been installed at three locations, near the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art and Maxwell Fine Arts gallery on Main Street, and along a stretch of South Division Street downtown. Eventually, the route will continue down Central Avenue and Water Street to the Hudson River.

"It's the intersection of art and education and community," said Jo-Ann Brody, a sculptor and teacher who helped coordinate the Public Tile Project. She took part in an inaugural walk yesterday from the Hudson Valley art center into downtown Peekskill. About 250 tiles were needed to create the trail, but children have created several times that number. None will go to waste, Brody said. Tiles will be placed every 18 feet along the sidewalks and incorporated into commemorative plaques along the path. Many of the tiles are now on display at the art center.

Using the tiles from The Home Depot and a palette of colors - light blue, dark blue, black, orange and red - young artists had a chance to choose a local symbol that had meaning to them. Their choices were wide ranging: the Tappan Zee Bridge, Lyndhurst, the Underground Railroad, lighthouses, the "indigenous white-tailed buck," and Henry Hudson himself. Yankee Stadium and Playland also turned up on the tiles. One child, after giving serious thought to choosing a favorite landmark, settled on Anthony's Pizzeria in Peekskill.

The project will help celebrate the 400th anniversary in October 2009 of Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River. Schools received educational materials about Dutch Delft tile, the blue and white artistic tradition. The inauguration coincides with the "All Fired Up" exhibition of clay art throughout Westchester County. Teaming up on the tile project were the arts center, the city, school district, other area schools and the Peekskill Arts Council.