

Members of the Northwest Iowa community are invited to work on a mural recognizing the area's culture and heritage starting in late July. Area artists and any interested persons are invited to help paint. The mural, under the sponsorship of the Luxembourg Heritage Society of Northwest Iowa, was designed by Amber Hansen, a community artist and Assistant Professor of Painting at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

The first step to complete the artwork will occur right after sundown on July 27 at the L & M Enterprises building, 1002 3rd Avenue in Alton, IA. At that time, Hansen will project and transfer the mural onto the wall, which measures 170 X 20 feet. "This is a beautiful part of the process because it's a moment when you can see the entire design illuminated onto the wall before it disappears and slowly reappears over the next couple weeks," Hansen said. Interested observers can bring lawn chairs or, if they wish to maintain social distancing, may remain in their cars to watch.

Hansen was born and raised in Alton and graduated from Spalding High School in Granville. She earned her B.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, in 2007, and her M.F.A. in Painting and Drawing in 2010 at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. She has worked with communities throughout the midwest and directed community murals in Miller, SD, Vermillion, SD, and Hartford, SD, among others.

Hansen, along with Nicholas Ward, produced and edited a full-length documentary film, "Called to Walls," that shows the process of creating community murals in Tonkawa, KS, a town of 3,000 people, and Joplin, MO, after a tornado ravaged the town. The film can be viewed at www.calledtowalls.com.

Hansen also holds dual citizenship with the United States and Luxembourg. She stated, "Through the process of gaining citizenship and designing the mural, I have learned about my

heritage and what it means to grow up in this region. In addition, I traveled to Luxembourg with family last summer, which also inspired some of the imagery represented in the mural.”

The artwork depicts the journey of Luxembourgers from Europe to Iowa, their arrival in Sioux County in 1870, and the indigenous history and culture of the area. The mural is a part of Lux Fest, a celebration of the immigrants’ arrival, which was originally planned for June 2020. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the festival has been rescheduled to June-5-6, 2021.

Additional information about Lux Fest can be found on the Luxembourg Heritage Society’s website, nwialux.org, or their Facebook page, Luxembourg Heritage Society of Northwest Iowa.

Artists and others who would like to participate in painting the mural can call 712-786-2754 or email stokes@midlands.net to schedule a work time.

The Luxembourg Heritage Society will hold its next meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 11, at the Alton Public Library, 605 10th St. in Alton. Planning for Lux Fest will resume, and anyone interested in helping with Lux Fest is welcome.