



Published on *East Lansing Info* (<https://eastlansinginfo.org>)

Home > Burcham Fence ?A Testament to the Goodwill of East Lansing Residents?

Burcham Fence ?A Testament to the Goodwill of East Lansing Residents? ^[1]

Monday, September 17, 2018, 8:06 am

By:

Ann Kammerer



Above: Imagery on the painted fence facing Burcham remains vivid despite the ravages of Michigan weather.

The day after the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, Stephanie Kribs realized she was grieving.

?It struck me how painful the election outcome was for a lot of people,? says Kribs. ?I began to compare it to a feeling of mourning.?

Kribs knew she needed to channel her emotions into something positive. Two years later with the approach of the 2018 Midterm Elections, Kribs takes comfort in the symbol of unity she and nearly 100 people created the Sunday following November 8, 2016.

?We wanted to take a visible action that resulted in something good and inclusive for the community,? she says. ?That?s where the idea of inviting people to help paint our fence came

in.?

That weekend, Kribs put a new twist on Robert Frost's adage "good fences make good neighbors" by turning their home's wooden fence into a canvas for peace, love and understanding. In the course of an afternoon, friends, neighbors and families painted a mural of smiley faces and peace signs along the 100-foot residential fence that faces Burcham Drive, on the corner of Knoll Road.

"Basically, I wanted to show our kids that we can do something," she says. "In the end, I felt we had done a service by providing people with an outlet for feeling so overwhelmed."



Above: The Kribs family stands near a favorite spot on the fence painted with the help of friends and neighbors. Back: Matt, Stephanie and Kaily. Front: Mari and Keaton.

Good days, sunshine

Kribs sought input on city regulations, then took to Facebook to organize the afternoon painting event. She invited everyone she knew in the area to come paint a peace sign or happy face, and to talk with or meet new friends. Neighbors invited neighbors. Friends told friends. Her children Kaily, Keaton and Mari told friends, too. People brought food and donated paint and brushes. In four hours, an unnoticed fence dappled with shade was transformed into a vivid pictogram of inclusion and neighborhood pride.

"My kids were so excited about the whole process," says Kribs. "My oldest kept a tally of everyone who came—including four dogs. She counted babies, people we didn't know, and even people passing by who stopped, grabbed a paint brush and contributed."

Kribs feels the success and ongoing reception of the fence reflects the welcoming community she sees throughout the city. Raised in Bath, Kribs and her husband, Matt, bought their ranch home in the Lantern Hill neighborhood in 2004. The move, she says, was a homecoming. She and Matt met as college students while working at the Wharton Center for Performing Arts. They

later became one of a handful of couples who exchanged wedding vows at Michigan's largest performing arts venue.

Even more, Kribs says, is the belonging she feels from moving back to a neighborhood her family helped shape. Her grandparents, Alan and Margaret Grimes, were among the MSU professors who united in the 1950s to design and build the Lantern Hill neighborhood. Today, the nature-infused residential district is a tribute to mid-century modern design, and to the ability to build and sustain community.

Kribs hopes the fence stands as a testament to the goodwill of East Lansing residents. She's saved the handwritten thank you notes her family has received from strangers, and has tracked the many Facebook comments she's seen. People stop on a regular basis to take photos along the fence line, and she's met dozens of people and students who use fence imagery as a profile picture on social media.

"It's old to some people and it's new to others," she says of the fence. "But I think it brings a message to everyone."

And as for touch-ups? Or painting the other side?

"We're hoping we don't have to do anything to it and just let it live its life," she says. "When it's time to take it down or put in a new fence, we'll take a piece or two from it."

Related Categories:

Random Acts ^[2]

Community ^[3]

Special Places ^[4]

ELi is a member of INN and LION Publishers



**Institute for
Nonprofit News**



This news is brought to you by our financial supporters!

Source URL: <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/burcham-fence-testament-goodwill-east-lansing-residents>

Links

- [1] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/burcham-fence-testament-goodwill-east-lansing-residents>
- [2] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/randomacts>
- [3] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/community>
- [4] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/places>