

MUA puts out call for young artists

By Danielle Delfin

BCT staff writer of The Burlington County Times.

MOUNT LAUREL - Children's artwork has always had a place of honor on family refrigerators.

Now imagine those colorful masterpieces high in the sky on a 160-foot municipal water tower seen by thousands of motorists each year.

The Mount Laurel Municipal Utilities Authority is giving students here that opportunity through an art contest running through Oct. 15.

The MUA is asking township students to submit their artistic ideas for the 500,000-gallon water tower on Fostertown Road. Entry forms have been given out at the Hartford and Thomas E. Harrington schools and are available through the MUA, as well.

Children of all ages are eligible, but they must be Mount Laurel residents, said Pam Carolan, the MUA's executive director.

She said the tower, which was constructed in 1988, is scheduled for a fresh coat of paint this year. The MUA board decided to extend the art contest as a way to create community awareness about water use and the existence of the authority, Carolan said.

Water towers need to be painted every 10 to 15 years. The interior and exterior of the Fostertown Road tower will be painted.

"It's for aesthetics, but it's really important to maintain the integrity of the tank, so that no metals or anything get into the water," Carolan said, adding that the tanks are inspected every five years.

She said the MUA board may choose to incorporate several contest entries into the final design.

The MUA has budgeted \$240,000 for the new paint job. Of that total, \$5,000 will be used to transform the student winners' artwork to the tower. The project is scheduled to go out to bid in early November and work should begin shortly after that, Carolan said.

It should be completed in the spring.

The MUA will have to empty the tank for the paint project. However, customers should not notice a difference in their service, Carolan said.

In 1999, the MUA ran a similar contest for the design of the water tower on Commerce Parkway, near Route 73. Six students were awarded prizes for their ideas. Concepts from

two entries were painted on the tower, including the smiling sun graphic and the slogan, "Where People Shine."

Contest prizes for the Fostertown Road tower's design will include U.S. Savings Bonds for first- through third-place winners in each of four age categories.

For an entry form, call the MUA at (856) 234-0062.

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