Philmont will trumpet Main Street upgrades in cyberspace

PHILMONT-The Philmont Beautification Committee has plans for a website that will continuously update improvements on Main Street buildings financed by a $179,264 Main Street grant from the state Division of Housing and Community Resources.

Taconic Hills High School junior Mike Wolferstieg will work on designing the site, and website designer Bram Moreinis will serve as project manager. "The website will be documentation and photos that show the buildings before, during and after; and also the history of the buildings," said Mr. Moreinis, a former teacher at Taconic Hills.

Mike Wolferstieg said he had not started working on the website. But he said the possibilities were "endless," and that he would eventually submit a portfolio of ideas to members of the Beautification Committee.

"Any project the Philmont Beautification Committee does includes an educational component, so that it's shared by as many members of the community as possible," said Sally Baker, the Philmont resident who wrote the applications securing the

Main Street grant. For that reason, she said, she asked Taconic Hills principal John Gulisane to recommend student participants when the Beautification Committee decided to establish a website. Mr. Gulisane had previously referred some of the 103 students who took part in a Main Street mural project in 2001, and the website wll include some elements in the Committee's archive from the mural project, according to Ms. Baker. The students collected an oral history as part of the mural project, and they created their

own drawings and paintings of some of their favorite Philmont buildings before the mural was started. They chose Chatham artist Roger Mason, Jr. to do the final painting, which is on a sidewall of the senior citizens center on Main Street.
"Most of the buildings we are working with are the history of Philmont," said Ms. Baker, "so now is an ideal time to start assembling a history of those buildings and other buildings in Philmont, to document how they've changed over the years and how they're going to be renovated through this project."

The idea behind the website, Ms. Baker said, was to provide a portal that could be used in schools to show how a community revitalization project takes shape. "I called Mr. Gulisane to say did he have students who could participate in building a website," said Ms. Baker, "and he referred me to Bram Moreinis." Mr. Moreinis established Tech Scouts, an organization for students interested in computers and the Internet in 1996, at Central Park East High School in Manhattan. He then brought the program to University Heights High School in the Bronx, Poughkeepsie High School, and Taconic Hills. He left Taconic

Hills this year to start his own web design firm, Beyond The Box, www.beyondboxweb.com.

"Because Beyond the Box and Tech Scouts are really focused on the local economy and working with communities, we're really delighted to be working with Philmont on this effort," said Mr. Moreinis. "We hope that in the future we can work with other teenagers in Philmont to grow the capacity to support more web and computer based service learning projects."

If the Beautification Committee is successful in securing grants for the website project, as Ms. Baker believes it will be, the project will provide paid summer employment for the students involved.

Mr. Moreinis said another Taconic Hills student would join Mike Wolferstieg in carrying out the project, but that the other student had not been selected as of this week. Ms. Baker said the website will have links to other organizations in the community, "so that it becomes a resource portal, a window onto Philmont." She hopes to see the website fully operational by September, 2006.

By RICHARD ROTH