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## Community rallies for art

Mestizo » Group seeks donations for west-side art institute

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Isaiah Govea was once a tagger who got in trouble for graffiti he left around town.

But now Govea, 18, is an artist.

Ruby Chacon, an artist who co-owns Mestizo Coffeehouse and co-founded the Mestizo Institute of Culture and Arts (MICA), saw Govea's potential and helped him channel his talent. Govea now gets paid for his works and hopes to major in art in college.

"They got me out of trouble," Govea said. "They got me off the streets. They gave me a place where I could do my art and express myself in the proper way."

Govea and about 40 others marched through west Salt Lake City on Saturday to raise awareness and money to keep MICA alive and thriving. They encouraged people to donate plasma and then give the proceeds to MICA as part of the organization's campaign to raise \$5 million to create an art institution on the city's west side.

MICA, a nonprofit group that exhibits art and seeks to build community through art, civic engagement and dialogue, is now housed inside the Mestizo Coffeehouse. But the coffeehouse, like many businesses has been hit by the recession and is having trouble supporting MICA. And MICA is looking to expand into a larger, permanent space.

"We have a lot of young people who come here and create, and pretty much consider this a haven," Chacon said. "We realize how much of a need there is and how much we've been embraced by the community, but we don't have the funds to sustain it."

That's why MICA volunteers are encouraging people to donate plasma this week at the Biomat USA Salt Lake City Donor Center, across the street from the coffeehouse.

"If they don't have a lot of in-pocket money, which many of us don't during this recession, they can still come donate," said Matt Bradley, a co-director with MICA.

But that's just one piece of a much broader campaign to raise \$5 million for a new, permanent space for MICA and its programs, many of which serve high school and college students. Chacon's husband Terry Hurst is also now riding his bicycle across the country to raise funds and awareness. And MICA is selling 5 million pixels, that can be filled with logos and will eventually create a piece of art, for \$1 each on the Web site [www.fivemilliondollarfund.org](http://www.fivemilliondollarfund.org).

It's a project that still has a long way to go: so far they've raised about \$20,000, said Dan Cairo, a MICA volunteer.

But MICA's supporters are committed to the cause. On Saturday, they marched the snowy, slushy streets of holding signs that said "Bleed for Art" and "Give Plasma, Build Community." As they walked, they shouted "What do we want? Art! When do we want it? Now!" Several lawmakers spoke after the march.

Caitlin Cahill, an assistant professor of city and metropolitan planning at the University of Utah, said

MICA gives west-side students an opportunity to become leaders in their community. Cahill is co-director of the Mestizo Arts and Activism Collective, a social justice think tank for young people that emphasizes community leadership through research, arts and activism that's part of a partnership between MICA the U. and other organizations.

"I can't imagine the community without it," Cahill said of MICA.

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What is the Mestizo Institute of Culture and Arts?

The institute, known as MICA, is a organization within the Mestizo Coffeehouse, 631 W. North Temple in Salt Lake City, that houses an art gallery and seeks to build community through arts and activism. MICA is looking to expand into a permanent art institution on the city's west side. To learn more or how to donate go to [www.fivemilliondollarfund.org](http://www.fivemilliondollarfund.org).

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