

# Butler resident decorates Stonybrook Swim Club walls with paintings of indigenous species.

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SUBURBAN TRENDS

The sounds of two-stroke engines could be heard cutting across a viciously hot Monday afternoon as a handful of men at the Stonybrook Swim Club did the arduous labor necessary to clean up winter's leavings before the park's "Open House" this weekend.

One person, however, was given a more creative job, and he sat alone near the far end of the pool, paintbrush in hand, plying his own quiet trade while the leaf blowers howled around him.

Christopher Puglise, 20, wore a backward baseball hat and headphones as he used thick blue paint to carefully backfill the outline of a turtle's shell that he'd drawn earlier with charcoal, individually painting each segment of the reptile's back.

Puglise, who has been drawing since he was 6 years old, didn't know that when he took the job as a summer camp counselor with the [Butler](#) Recreation Department he'd be getting the opportunity to show off his artistic faculties. In fact, when the project was proposed, he was initially a bit wary of painting on the pool area's cement walls.

"I was nervous because I had never worked on masonry and had never worked with house paint," he said. "But it's working out pretty good."

The turtle is the fourth of his paintings that will festoon the walls of the pool area. He already has finished a black bear, a frog, and a generously sized, very intricate bass.

The [Butler](#) resident said he owes his interest in drawing and art to the cartoons and comic books that he began reading as a child.

"That just got me into it," he said.



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Summer Camp Counselor Chris Puglise in the process of painting a turtle on the walls of the Stonybrook Swim Club in Butler. Puglise has been in the process of creating five different images of different indigenous species over past weeks to decorate the area.

Over the past couple years, the tall, soft-spoken sophomore at the Ramapo College of New Jersey has taken up painting as well and generally prefers creating oil paintings or watercolors.

One day, the visual arts major hopes to make a career out of drawing. But for now, he's got more time to put in on the turtle.

"This one is going on about four hours," he said, gesturing to the half-completed shell. The fish took about eight, he said, while the others took three hours apiece.

The idea for the painting project came from Craig Behan, the recreation director for [Butler](#), who said that while anyone can run a leaf blower or a power washer, Puglise had an aptitude for art that could be put to better use.

"I heard he was talented, and figured you know what?" he said, while looking at the paintings from a distance. "I think they're great, and he is very talented."

Behan said he wanted Puglise to paint animals that were all indigenous to the area and to "make the place look really cool."

He agrees that the camp counselor has done the job and pointed out the bass specifically are "gorgeous."

Puglise has one more likeness left to paint: a blue heron that Behan said has lived in the wooded area behind the pool for the past five years.

"He comes out a couple times a day, he does a couple laps" in the air, Behan said. "He's pretty spectacular looking. I figured he's earned his place on the wall."

For the unobtrusive Puglise, it's all the same. If anything, he wished that he'd come out on Sunday, when it was cooler out.

"It was cloudy (Sunday)," he said. "The paint dries right in the bucket when it's this hot."

Behan himself is a bit more excited about what the kids and parents will say when they start rolling in to kick off the season this weekend.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOE SARNO

Puglise's rendering of bass that adorns Stonybrook's walls.

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