naissance. For example, the city's Riverfront Park project has been the catalyst for development of seven million square feet of residential and commercial space in Denver's central business district.

• The Mississippi River, flowing through the middle of St. Paul, Minnesota, is now cleaner than at any time in the past 50 years because of the city's and state's commitment to its restoration. At the same time, residential property values in neighborhoods adjacent to the river have increased by 40 percent, and the downtown is booming as commercial investment increases.

• Once one of the nation's most polluted rivers, the Willamette River is the centerpiece of Portland, Oregon. Parks extend all along the riverside. Hundreds of thousands of people attend festivals and concerts held during the summer. Thousands of pleasure boats and rowing crews dot the river. Anglers pull 25-pound chinook salmon from the river in the downtown area.

These examples are just a sampling of successful river restoration efforts that are taking place all over the country.

AHRI: The Next Step in Local River Restoration

But we have a long way to go. While many communities are working hard to mobilize resources to care for their hometown rivers, they need help — not just dollars but experience, expertise, and information on the most effective restoration tools and techniques.

AHRI offers communities that choose to participate in this voluntary initiative an opportunity to reach out for additional help. An initiative whose purpose is to sustain and strengthen local economies by restoring and protecting hometown rivers, AHRI 1) supports ongoing, successful community-based river restoration projects and 2) jump-starts projects in communities that lack the resources to begin repairing their rivers. Each community selects the resources it needs to advance, shape, and direct its individual revitalization efforts in order to reap economic and environmental benefits from a restored river.

Combatting Anti-Environmental Extremists

American Rivers has launched an outreach and public education campaign to counter the attack on AHRI by anti-environmentalists. We are working on both the local and national levels to educate members of Congress, the media, local elected officials, and community groups. We are also working to raise awareness among a broad coalition of diverse groups and individuals of the economic and environmental advantages that AHRI will bring to those who participate in the initiative.

You can join our efforts by spreading the word. Please contact Congress and the White House and voice your support for the American Heritage Rivers Initiative so that local communities across America can realize the long-forgotten promise that clean, healthy rivers hold for our nation. (See box, page 3.)

What is the American Heritage Rivers Initiative (AHRI)?

• A new community-based initiative that will help communities bolster their economies by giving them tools and resources to clean up their rivers and restore their riverfronts.

• The first environmental initiative focused on the vital role that rivers play in the health and well-being of our communities.

What advantages will communities gain by participating in AHRI?

• Assistance in cutting through red tape to access the many existing federal programs that are currently available to help communities restore rivers.

• Opportunity to tap into additional resources and expertise to support community-led, action-oriented, local river restoration and protection programs. Informational tools will include:

- a "State of the Rivers" Internet site that will provide links to federal agencies with river information and expertise;
- a "Talent Bank" that will allow communities to share knowledge and techniques for community river restoration and revitalization efforts; and
- a catalog of federal support to help all communities find the assistance they need.

• Opportunity to nominate hometown rivers for special designation as "American Heritage Rivers." Communities whose rivers are selected will receive focused support to guide them to the federal resources and services that best meet their needs.

This support will include:

- visibility and national recognition, leading to new sources of private support;
- streamlined access to federal resources and funding;
- help in calling on businesses, grassroots groups, state, tribal and local governments to work together;
- "River Navigator" to guide communities to federal resources they need to implement their restoration plans.

• Opportunity to study successful local river restoration efforts around the country and learn about the most effective, state-of-the-art tools and techniques.

• Public that is better educated and more aware of benefits provided by restored rivers.

How will communities nominate their rivers to be named American Heritage Rivers?

• By completing a nomination form that includes the following elements:

- a description of the distinctive natural, economic, scenic, historic, cultural, and/or recreational features of the river;
- a community-based plan of action for restoring the river that has a broad spectrum of community support;
- a method for measuring results that benefit the community;
- a commitment to implementing partnership-based solutions.

Nomination forms will be available in mid-September from the Council on Environmental Quality (see address below). The deadline for applications is early December.

How will the American Heritage Rivers be selected?

• A selection council convened by President Clinton will make selections based on the following criteria:

- the uniqueness of the river's features in exemplifying America's river heritage;
- the potential for the project to serve as a model of innovative, economically successful and environmentally sustainable solutions for community-led river restoration projects.

• The first 10 American Heritage Rivers will be announced by President Clinton in early January 1998.

How can I find out more about AHRI?

• Visit the American Heritage Rivers Initiative web site at **www.epa.gov/OWOW/heritage/rivers.html** or contact the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Old Executive Office Building, Room 360, Washington, D.C. 20501. Phone: (202) 395-7417; fax (202) 456-6546.

• Visit the American Rivers web site at: **www.amrivers.org**

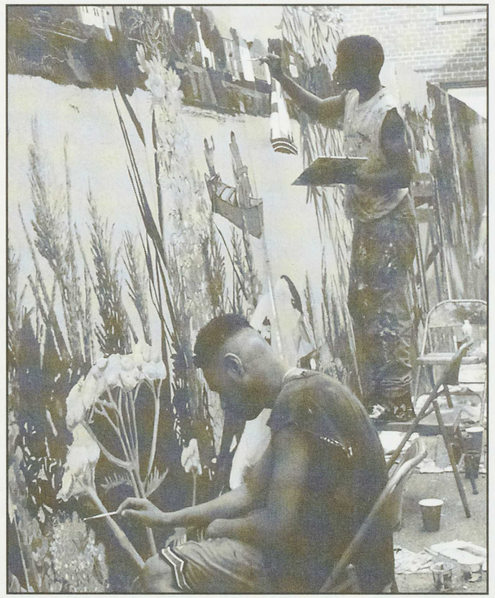

Photo: David Fichter

The Mystic River Mural was painted by 13 teenage artists from local communities, who now view their river with pride. The Mystic River Mural Project of the Somerville Art Council, Somerville, MA, is a 1997 Third National Urban Rivers Awards winner (gold in education category). See story on page 6.

New Web Address

American Rivers' home page has a new Internet address. Come visit us!

http://www.amrivers.org

Heed the Call to Action

continued from page 2

are now waging a 500-fax-an-hour war and bombarding communities, local officials, members of Congress, the White House, and the media with misleading and inaccurate information about AHRI.

We need your help. AHRI offers the best opportunity we have had in a generation for mobilizing communities and individuals across the nation to achieve American Rivers' vision: a future where healthy rivers support naturally functioning ecosystems, are safe for human consumption and recreation, contribute to sustainable local economies, and improve the quality of life for all Americans.

But this initiative will succeed only if we, as conservationists and river lovers, respond enthusiastically to AHRI's call to action to work together and to let those who are now shaping and defining this initiative know that we support their efforts.

Please read the article about AHRI and the support it is winning around the country; and most important, please turn to page 3 and follow the instructions on how to contact the White House and your representatives in Congress to show your support.

Lend your voice to those Americans who love rivers and believe that protecting them is protecting one of this country's most valuable natural and economic assets.