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122 'Cool Globes' latest hot idea for summer in the city

ART | Lakefront designs will spin variety of solutions to global warming

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In a North Side warehouse, dozens of artists are constructing oversize globes with an aim toward building a better world.

The 122 five-foot-tall orbs will be installed on Chicago's lakefront this summer in a \$3 million effort called "Cool Globes: Hot Ideas for a Cooler Planet."

Professional artists, starting with pre-made plain white fiberglass globes, are customizing them to make points about conservation. One globe, for example, features pinwheels to tout wind power. Another uses old junk mail to urge recycling.

Nancy Bank painted images of children engaged in various outdoor activities, such as bicycling and hiking, to press the idea that kids need to get outside more to develop a stewardship of nature.

On Bank's globe, two children crouch near Hawaii and reach for the islands, which, in perspective,

COOL GLOBES



appear as skipping stones.

"I want to say, 'Look under rocks and see all the cool things that live there,'" said Bank.

She'll also include a message: "Leave no child indoors."

Cool Globes is the brainchild of Wendy Abrams of Highland Park. The 42-year-old mother of four and former marketer became an environmental activist and now serves on the boards of several environmental groups.

'Three drunk sailors' test

In December 2005, she approached Field Museum President John McCarter, who agreed to back "Cool Globes." Abrams won support from the city and Chicago Park District and raised \$3 million for the project, securing sponsorships from such blue-chip companies as Exelon and Pepsi.

"My goal is to get people to start thinking about the issue of global warming and make a change in their lives," said Abrams.

Artists — who range from local creative types to Juame Plensa, designer of the popular Crown Fountain video tower in Millennium Park — are paid \$2,000 for their works.



Artist Lisa Fedich (left), aided by Jamie Topper, places pinwheels made by hospitalized kids on her globe, touting wind power. | KEITH HALE-SUN-TIMES

The globes will be installed June 1, anchored by concrete foundations. Abrams said each was given a "three drunk sailors" test to make sure vandals couldn't roll them away. They will be removed Oct. 2 and auctioned off, with proceeds

used to fund environmental education in Chicago Public Schools.

Abrams said she hopes the globes become as popular with the public as the famed fiberglass "Cows on Parade" that brightened the city in 1999.