

by David Cox

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When the Labour Council in St. Thomas-Elgin commissioned a monument to workers injured or killed on the job, they turned to David Morris, a welding and robotics teacher at Fanshawe College.

David, a steward with Local 110, is also a well known artist in the area. His union activism and industrial arts skills have combined with his art training to produce an imposing and dramatic monument that reflects the struggles of working people from all backgrounds and occupations.

The labour monument was several years in the planning and almost a year in the making. It was finally unveiled



CP photo: S. Martin

OPSEU steward's sculpture honours injured workers

in a prominent location in St. Thomas's Pinafore Park for last year's Day of Mourning on April 28.

St. Thomas is historically a blue-collar town based on railway, manufacturing and auto sectors, but the workforce has become more diverse in recent years. White-collar office work is growing in importance and more women are in the workforce. That ruled out a figurative work representing an actual worker.

“I wanted something that represented labourers and the problems of the workplace,” David said. “But it's difficult to represent people and be inclusive.” This led to an abstract design rather than a literal representation of a worker with a lunch pail.

He looked to building and bridge construction for inspiration.

“I wanted something that was going to make an impact and would not be disregarded,” Morris said. “Something that would have some size and some height.” The result was an aluminum post and lintel design, 15 feet high and six by four feet at the base with four supporting columns.

He used aluminum for its lightness and reflective qualities. “It flashes with the sun and changes with the atmosphere. All of the pieces were individually shaped with a hammer; they were forged, welded and ground to make the shape; not cast but hand-wrought.”

Smaller elements not visible at first glance include a frieze of leaves on one side signifying the heroism of workers, and the labour symbol of two hands holding the globe. ▲