



Villa Charities Offers Canadian Artists a Chance to Create a Mural in Italy's "Open-Air Museum"

The Aielli Mural Project selects one emerging artist to contribute to Borgo Universo's renowned cultural program in Aielli, Italy.

Toronto, ON – February 23, 2026 – Villa Charities Inc., a Toronto registered charity and non-profit organization, is proud to announce the launch of the Aielli Mural Project in partnership with Borgo Universo. This program offers one emerging Canadian artist the chance to create a mural in Aielli, Italy—a medieval village renowned for its vibrant street art and cultural heritage.

Nestled on the mountains of the Sirente-Velino Regional Park and overlooking the Fucino Plain in Abruzzo, the Medieval village of Aielli has been experiencing a renaissance in the last decade, thanks to a suite of initiatives called Borgo Universo. Borgo Universo was created by combining art and science as a means to attract tourism and revitalize the 1,400-inhabitant village.

Specifically, Aielli features an open-air gallery of murals, sculptures and installations created by global street artists under the patronage of Borgo Universo. To promote the creation and the publicizing of the murals as a tourist attraction, the non-profit cooperative La Maesa was created.

Through this collaboration, Villa Charities will select one Canadian visual artist between the ages of 18 and 35 to travel to Aielli in July 2026, to complete a mural that celebrates the historical links between Italy and Canada.

“This initiative reflects our dedication to fostering artistic exchange and promoting the next generation of Canadian talent on a global stage,” said Marco DeVuono, President and CEO, Villa Charities Inc. “We are excited to offer this unique platform for creativity and collaboration.”

By championing arts and innovation, Villa Charities continues to build bridges that celebrate diversity and artistic excellence while strengthening cultural connections between Canada and Italy.

“Borgo Universo was born to bring new life to Aielli through art and science,” said Emanuela Ponari, Communications & Community Manager, La Maesa. “Partnering with Villa Charities allows us to expand this vision internationally and welcome Canadian creativity into our village’s story.”

Applications open Monday, February 23, 2026, at 12:00pm (EST) and close Friday, March 13, 2026, at 5:00pm (EDT).

Eligible artists must:

- Be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, aged 18–35.
- Submit a mural concept highlighting historical links between Italy and Canada.
- Demonstrate prior experience with community-driven public art projects.
- Be available to travel to Aielli in July 2026 and complete the mural within one week.

The winning artist will receive:

- A stipend of \$1,000 CAD.
- Round-trip economy airfare to Rome.
- Accommodation and materials provided by La Maesa and the Municipality of Aielli.

The evaluation process will be conducted by a Selection Committee. The winner will be announced at the end of April 2026.

For more information and complete submission guidelines, please visit villacharities.com/grant or contact execs@villacharities.com.

About Villa Charities Inc.

Villa Charities Inc. (VCI) is a registered charity and non-profit organization that enriches lives through experiences and services that honour Italian culture and heritage. For more than 50 years across the GTA, Villa Charities has provided cultural and educational programs and supported culturally sensitive long-term care and independent living apartments for seniors. VCI fulfills their mandate through a broad range of activities, services and facilities, both directly and in conjunction with its affiliates and independent organizations. Affiliates include Columbus Centre and Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery; Villa Colombo Homes for the Aged Inc. in Toronto; Villa Colombo Seniors Centre (Vaughan) Inc. Di Poce Centre; Italian Canadian Benevolent Seniors Apartments Corporation/Casa Abruzzo Benevolent Corporation with apartments for independent seniors (Caboto Terrace, Casa Del Zotto and Casa Abruzzo); and Leonardo Da Vinci Academy. Each of these

organizations is an integral part of the Villa Charities family with separate legal status and its own governance Board. Villa Charities has been certified as a Great Place to Work®, which recognizes the organization’s commitment to creating an inclusive, positive and engaging workplace. For more information visit villacharities.com.

About Borgo Universo

Borgo Universo is a cultural initiative based in Aielli, Italy, combining art and science to revitalize the village and attract global visitors. Through murals, installations, and events, Borgo Universo transforms Aielli into an open-air gallery and a hub for creativity. The initiative was launched in 2017 as a street art and astronomy festival, with the aim of telling, through street art, the history of the town and its unique contact with the cosmos. Since then, every year new internationally renowned artists have been invited to paint new stories and visions on the walls, giving life to an “open-air museum” spread across the streets of the town, with more than 40 murals, sculptures and installations. For more information visit borgouniverso.com.

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