



Boys & Girls Club art program winning awards

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Staff Writer

CARLSBAD -- The founders of a free art program for children at local Boys & Girls Clubs said last week they hope success breeds success and that they'll be able to take the program countywide and then nationwide.

Founded in 1999 by Oceanside artist and philanthropist Jan Rolston and partner Harry Duvall of Encinitas, the program known as picART, or partners in compassion ART, now offers 11 classes per week at San Dieguito and Carlsbad Boys & Girls Clubs and an outreach class at the Casa de Amparo shelter for abused women and children in Oceanside.

Professional artists and teachers skilled in scenic design, metalsmithing, photography and scientific illustration serve about 320 children ages 7 through 14. Ten-week sessions are offered three times per year.

Rolston, picART's executive director, said the program is aimed at reaching potentially troubled kids and uses art to improve social and life skills, attitudes and behaviors.

"In my life I've changed people's lives around by showing them what the excitement of art can do for them," she said. "That creative process helps bring people alive.

"It's also part of giving back. I'm teaching people so they can teach other people ... really to spread the electricity and the inspiration that art can bring."

Duvall, a former college administrator and picART's program director, said art also helps teach cultural and social issues.

"We really get them (the children) thinking more deeply," he said.

The artist-teachers work closely with children as mentors and become "another positive role model for the kids," Duvall said. "Positive relationships with adults are important, and it's an environment where people care about them. It's a safe place."

Now in its second year, picART is drawing both praise and awards.

A 10-by-15-foot mural created by students in the spring and dedicated to world peace won best of show at the Del Mar Fair and is now on exhibit at the California State Fair in Sacramento, where judges picked it for the first-place Award of Excellence for 2001-- the highest award given at the state event.

The program "is awesome," said Jan Giacinti, former director of the Carlsbad Boys & Girls Club and now director of the San Diego County Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs Programs. "It just keeps getting better. The stuff the kids are producing is phenomenal."

Giacinti said picART was named the best arts and drama program for 2000 among all Boys & Girls Clubs in Southern California.

"What we saw is, it really helps kids with behavior issues," she said. "It has really turned some kids around. We'd love to take the program to all the Boys & Girls Clubs in San Diego County if we get the funding."

Rolston said she would not only like to bring picART to all 13 Boys & Girls Clubs in the county but would also like to take it nationwide.

But funding is a critical issue and she is hoping to attract grants as well as private and corporate donations to serve more children in more locations.

At the Carlsbad club on Thursday students and teachers were busy slapping paint on canvas to create colorful floor mats with beach and nature scenes.

Katy Murphy, 10, was painting her name on canvas, “and then I’m going to make all kinds of pictures in the background -- beach pictures, rainbows. I just like to draw and paint.”

Breanna Racheck, 10, said, “Whenever I do art it truly makes me feel happy.”

Misty Houska, 12, said, “PicART is an exciting program. You get to learn a lot and you get to hang out with your friends.”

“It’s fun,” said Aubrey Houska, 11, painting a pond with lily pads, frogs, crabs and fish. “I like painting and getting messy.”

“My favorite is clay,” said Alex Gonzalez, 9. “I like to use my imagination with all the shapes.”

Artist-teacher Victoria Petrovich, a professional stage scene designer, said she decided to take up teaching because “I was working as a professional artist and not doing enough to change the world. All the reasons I fell in love with art in the first place are right here with these kids.”

Those wishing to know more about the program or sign up for PicART courses can call Duvall at (760) 635-2925.

Those wishing to contribute can call Rolston at (760) 722-3807.

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