

Bringing Art back to Greenfield Students

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

As a kid, I loved art in school—drawing, painting, collage, papier maché. Art class was the highlight of my day. So, I was distressed when I learned that art would be cut from the public school curriculum at the Albert M. Greenfield School because of inadequate funds. Until last year, Greenfield had an art teacher who taught art to each class once a week for 45 minutes. At her retirement, school funding was inadequate to replace her. A group of parents was so upset about losing art instruction for their children that in the fall of 2011 they formed a committee. Nell McClister, committee co-chair, several parents and a teacher began a search for arts organizations in the city with outreach programs to bring art back to Greenfield School for free. To pay for programs requiring fees they wrote grant proposals.

The outcome was that this past school year Greenfield students attended exciting art workshops taught by real artists. Partners who brought workshops to Greenfield for



Greenfield's fifth graders created this diorama during a six-week ceramic workshop taught by teachers from The Clay Studio.

free included the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA), Barnes Foundation, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Art Goes to School, Fabric Workshop and Museum and Fairmount Art Center. Teaching artists, art education interns and volunteer

artists taught workshops at every grade level, kindergarten through eighth grade.

At his 22 Gallery show in November 2011, Ed Bronstein, a local artist and grandparent of two Greenfield School

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students, advertised that half the proceeds of the sales of his paintings would go to Greenfield School for their art program. He raised more than \$3,000, which the parent committee used (1) to fund a workshop with Artwell/The Art of Growing Up, in which kids learned about West African coming-of-age rituals and created life masks; (2) to fill a three-tier portable "art cart" with art supplies for visiting art teachers and parent volunteers who reserve the cart to take into classrooms; and (3) to fund honoraria for volunteer artists from the community and from the PMA. In addition, Stephane Rowley, a teaching artist with the PMA, visited the fourth grade for four weeks to teach how to paint on wood panels in a style inspired by the work of Jacob Lawrence, a noted African-American artist. Moore College of Art students Leah Koontz and Anastasia Angelillo conducted four-week workshops for the kindergarten

students in self-portraits and color-contrast projects. Local artist Abstract Nteligent and parent Rose Paisley worked with the middle-school students to develop a striking mural on a playground wall.

The Claymobile, funded by a \$2,500 Picasso Project grant from Public Citizens for Children and Youth, provided a six-week ceramic art workshop to the fifth grade. The workshop was integrated with their science and social studies curriculum on ecosystems, indigenous populations in the Americas and contemporary environmental challenges. Two Clay Studio teaching artists transported the students' work in the Claymobile van to the studio in Old City so it could be fired twice—before and after glazing. The students created a diorama of Philadelphia of the Future that had green vehicles and buildings and was powered by clean energy. It was

unveiled at a reception on June 6. Fifth grade teacher Ms. Brown, talked about the project enthusiastically. Her eyes lit up when she described the students' reactions. "Even kids struggling academically shined when they participated in this project."

Parent volunteers, including Paz Sandoval-Fernandez, Tricia Benedetto, Kay Montgomery, Iva Kelman and Lena Kim provided art activities throughout the year, including cave paintings, self-portraits and flower paintings inspired by Van Gogh. Many volunteer artists used their own money to purchase materials for the classes.

Plans for partnerships starting Fall 2012 are in the works with the Print Center, the Rosenbach Museum & Library, Fleisher Art Memorial, Spiral Q, Fresh Artists, Mural Arts, Tyler School of Art and Utrecht.

Businesses: Help Greenfield and Get a Tax Credit

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

The Education Improvement Tax Credit program enables businesses to donate money to schools instead of paying state taxes as long as the funds are used for programs eliminated due to budget cuts in studio arts, performing arts and foreign languages. In order to qualify, the Greenfield Home and School Association established an Educational Improvement Organization, which must report how the funds will be used and the plan must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools. Participating businesses receive a tax credit of 75% of their contribution up to \$300,000. If they donate the same amount for two consecutive years, the tax credit increases to 90%. For information, please contact Melissa April at mApril@me.com or Caryn Abramowitz at clabramowitz@gmail.com.