2010 Helen Keller International Tour Artists

A parent’s viewpoint of the value of their child’s participation in the art exhibit was evident in an article written in a parent newsletter. Following are quotes from that article:

“Art is a wonderful means for children to express themselves. They can put color to complex emotions and develop new perspectives for viewing the world. Even children with visual or other sensory impairments can enjoy and learn from creating their own art”

“My daughter, Maria, has participated in these programs for several years and we can attest to the value of this program. Not only has the program improved her self-esteem but has opened a great love and talent for visual art that could easily have been overlooked or disregarded.”
History of the Helen Keller International Art Show

The Helen Keller International Art Show is a project of the international Division on Visual Impairments of the Council for Exceptional Children. Sponsorship is through the University of Alabama at Birmingham Vision Science Research Center, UAB School of Optometry and the UAB School of Education. In 1995, the CEC-DVI board met to plan a national art show for children with visual impairments, which replicated the 15-year-old exhibit begun in Alabama, Helen Keller’s home state. This team had a vision that was to impact the lives of children who are blind, deafblind, and visually impaired through their artistic abilities. They wanted others to see that children with sensory impairments have creativity and desire to excel just as their sighted peers.

Each year, art is solicited from children with sensory impairments enrolled in public, private, home and residential schools from all over the world to compete in the Helen Keller International Art Show. The annual call for art is completed through national professional and parent publications, letters to state directors of exceptional education, superintendents of residential schools, and university programs training teachers of the blind and deafblind. All students who enter the show are “winners” and receive certificates of participation. The exhibit art pieces are selected by judges representing art museums, art editors from daily newspapers, teachers of the sensory impaired, other educational professionals and staff members and members of the Ivy Green Property Board. The juried pieces of work are then framed and are placed on exhibit in various locations such as the International Convention of CEC, Washington National Cathedral, American Foundation for the Blind, Virginia Sowell Center at Texas Tech University, Georgia Academy for the Blind, University of Alabama Medical Center Library and Eye Foundation Hospital-Low Vision Clinic. Sites for display are determined by national meeting places and request by individual groups. Selected pieces have been purchased by publishing companies for exhibit and other textbooks publishers to be included in specific chapters of the text. The exhibit travels with a booklet listing each student by name, grade, and a brief biography. Press releases are sent to cities and towns for students who are selected for the exhibit.

The following are examples of ways art touches lives. Previously, one of the Helen Keller International Art Show students was featured on 20/20 with Barbara Walters and Hugh Downs. The student had had brain surgery due to a seizure disorder. The surgery had left this student visually and physically impaired. But through determination and with very supportive parents, the student overcame many barriers. This child became an excellent student and an accomplished artist.

Also, the Helen Keller International Art Show exhibited 25 select pieces at the UPS World Headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia as part of an American Foundation for the Blind Southeast Region meeting. Two of the artist were invited to attend and were recognized by the agencies for their abilities and accomplishments. This was an exceptional treat for the students. One family’s only means of transportation was by bus. They traveled over six hours to be present for this recognition. The smiles on their faces reminded one that this would be recognition they would cherish forever.

2010 Participating Schools

Alabama:
- Mobile Regional School for the Deaf and Blind
- Paine Primary School
- Oak Mountain Elementary
- Erwin Elementary
- Gardendale Elementary
- Chalkville Middle School
- Clay Chalkville High School
- Hewitt Trussville High School

California:
- California School for the Blind
- Rancho Elementary

New Jersey:
- Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph’s School for the Blind

New York:
- Bowling Green Elementary
- Parkway Elementary

Texas:
- Post High School

Anyone interested in:
- Purchasing pieces of work
- Supporting the exhibit through donations
- More information

Please contact

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Helen Keller International Art Show

“Color Cookies”
Bailey Olmstead
Alabama