

ARTS AFTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2002-2003

CHANGING LIVES...Personal Transformation Through Community Service

Co-sponsored by
The Christian Association and the Arts and Spirituality Center
2002-2003

“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.” *Sitting Bull, Lakota Sioux 1877*

PURPOSE

Arts After School connects under-served children with university students, in a program affiliated with church-related after school programs. Our goal is to expose children to various art forms using them to discuss peacemaking, conflict resolution and reconciliation while also providing university students the opportunity to serve as mentors, role models, and teachers. The following comments were made by the program staff members from the two host sites.

- “We have benefited greatly from the wonderful presentations that you and the students prepared.”
- “This is a creative way to expose our children to talented people.”

St. Barnabus Women’s Shelter

- “Arts After School is definitely the highlight of this kids week...they are always asking when are you coming next!”
- “[Arts After School] allows children the chance to explore in fun ways the beauty and commonalities in cultures.”
- “They love the attention from the college students.”

Calvin Presbyterian Church



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

This was our second year of operation of the Arts After School program at Calvin Presbyterian Church at 60th and Master Streets with approximately 32 children. It was our first year providing services to St. Barnabus Women's Shelter at 60th and Girard with a fluctuating enrollment of about 15 youngsters. Each location is quite distinct, being operationally different while exhibiting its capacity to serve diverse clientele. As such, there are various challenges and unique experiences for the university students who volunteered their time and energy.

St. Barnabus Women’s Shelter is a full service social agency providing a six-month housing opportunity for mothers whose children have few resources. Because the children’s life situations seemed to require more individualized teaching and guidance, the children seemed to blossom as the university students held them on their laps,

showed them how to use a glue gun, or created art with them.

This site also had a wider range of children, age six to sixteen challenging the University students to develop activities that would encourage the older youth’s participation while, at the same time, being within the capabilities of the younger ones.

The program at Calvin Presbyterian Church was twice as large and includes children who are street-savvy and often, more mature for their age. This was an additional challenge for the university volunteers.

WHAT WE DO

University students who are eager to do significant community service with children or are artistically inclined themselves are recruited for the weekly program. Each week there is singing and affirmations by Ms. Marcy, or Mama Marcy as she was sometimes called and visiting artists such as a storyteller, dancer, drummer musicians, and step dancing. The volunteers read a specially selected storybook teaching humanistic values of respect, peace and reconciliation followed by an art project that sparks a discussion of each story's themes.

Activities included designing and creating a colorful tower with paints, glitter, and found objects, inspired by *The Wonderful World of Watts* and designing a quilt out of felt squares inspired by *The Quiltmakers Gift*. Decorative magic wands made out of chopsticks illustrated the story of *Abiyoyo*. Eight storybooks were used in all.

Because the onset of war against Iraq, had a negative effect on the children, sometimes we gathered in a circle and talked openly about fear. The university students reminisced about their fears as young children and what they did to overcome or address them thus providing a forum to validate the children's fears.

Who We Are

While the program was designed for Penn students, we had seven from Drexel, one each from Villa Nova and Tufts, and twenty five from University of Penn. Thirty four university students, twenty-one men and thirteen women participated in all. In addition, the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity used this opportunity as part of their community service project. The diversity of our corp of volunteers means they bring something unique to the relationships that form each week. Some examples are;

Our Asian and Asian American volunteers, *Tae Youn*, *Qi Li* and *Jenny*, reminded the children of racial diversity. Soft-spoken *Taj*, who never drew attention to himself, caused the children to flock to his side. *Syreeta* and *Farralon* were adept at restraining the bullies. Neither *Jenny* nor *Sarah*, with their long, straight hair, objected to the little girls braiding their hair. Shy children tended to be less intimidated by the quiet, gentle nature of *Katie*, *Mikel* and *Vicki*. *Matt*, *Grant* and *Ashton* worked on developing friendships with the little boys who needed more attention and guidance. *Earl* and *James* were extroverts with a high energy level making them natural leaders, helpful in channeling the energies of the children into productive activities. Two of our volunteers changed their vocational plans because of the positive experiences they had with the children.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

A special thank you to the volunteers who made the 2002-2003 program such a success!

Christopher Amos • Kiel Berry • Ashton Cherry • Syreeta Collier • Max Covil • Chris Everett
Taj Frazier • Sarah Gilfillan • Stephanie Gonzalez • James Irvin • Simeona Jacinto • Grant Johnson
Tae Youn Kim • Qi Li • Morris Martin • Kathleen McDonough • Weldon McMillan • Earl Murray
Andre Nelson • Daniel Pulley • Matthew Sears • Mikel Sims • Jenny Suen • Katie Turner • Imo Udom • Jason Wiley • Matthew Williams • Farralon Wilson • Shira Yevin • Alex • Segun

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