

Say Cheese! Media Arts: The Backstory

Until he became a student at Inner-City Arts, Alvin's family didn't have a single picture of him—at least not one in which he posed and willingly smiled. Alvin is autistic and had always been camera-shy. Even during his time in the Media Arts program at Inner-City Arts, the third grader was more comfortable behind the camera than in front of it. It wasn't until his last day of class at Inner-City Arts that he eagerly posed for a photo.

Inner-City Arts teaching artist Alexis Ratkevich is blending photography, filmmaking, animation and computer technology to create the new Media Arts program, currently for 3rd-7th graders. "In addition to being creative through art, I realized there was a need for our students to learn basic computer skills like naming files, burning CDs and using software to manipulate photos," said Alexis. "With digital photography, the students learn the elements of basic photography like scale, angles, light and lighting, and color, and get to explore and experiment with these out in the field and on the computer. But they also learn cooperation, sharing and communication, asking their models (fellow classmates) to pose like this or look here."

For Media Arts, the campus has truly become a backdrop for the students' work. From the buildings to the gardens to all of the artwork placed around the campus, the students find innumerable subjects to photograph just outside their classroom door. Each student takes home a CD of his or her work.

Alexis recently saw some of her 3rd grade students again. She asked what they did with their photo CDs after the semester ended. "I shared my pictures with my grandma and my uncle," beamed one young man.

Another student asked her father to take her to the library so she could keep working on it.

And Alvin's family is thrilled to now have a photograph of their beloved son.

"In addition to being creative through art, I realized there was a need for our students to learn basic computer skills."



Photograph by Inner-City Arts 3rd grade student



Photograph by Inner-City Arts 7th grade student



Photograph by Inner-City Arts 5th grade student

About Inner-City Arts

Inner-City Arts is a learning oasis in the heart of Los Angeles' Skid Row where professional artists teach students in a real studio environment. Since its inception, Inner-City Arts has served 150,000 of the city's most at-risk children at no cost to the students.

About the Need

- Within a 2.5 mile radius of Inner-City Arts, there are 42 elementary schools with an enrollment of 30,000 of the city's poorest children.
- Only 44% of high school students in Los Angeles graduate.
- Nearly 1/2 of African American and Hispanic students in US public schools do not graduate.
- Most students in California do not receive arts instruction, even at the level required by state law.
- 29% of California's K-12 schools offer no study in any arts discipline. Students who attend schools with high levels of poverty have the least access arts instruction.
- Respected research shows that the longer children are involved in arts programs, the more positive the impact on their academic achievement and school attendance.

Design: KBDA, Los Angeles. Writing: Brody Public Relations. Printing courtesy of ColorGraphics.

ART PROGRAMS ARE ESSENTIAL

Our education systems are in crisis. It is particularly acute in the arts, which tends to be the first area cut from school programs. Visual and performing arts have the power to transform Los Angeles' most challenged schools, bridge the achievement gap and keep children from dropping out of school.

A gift of only \$160 will provide a full year of classes for one child. With your support, we will ensure that all our City's children have access to arts-rich programming and the chance to succeed in school.

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

Visit our new website at www.inner-cityarts.org. The site was designed by KBDA, and it's the next best thing to being on our campus. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and send your email address to info@inner-cityarts.org to help us go paperless.



Photograph by Inner-City Arts 7th grade student

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November 2009

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INNER-CITYARTS
NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER 2009

The Art of the Matter



What's Your Bumper Sticker? After-School Workshops Provide Safe Haven of Creativity

If you had a bumper sticker for your life, what would it be?

This is one question posed in the new "Eamon Cannon Comedy Class," a free after-school workshop at Inner-City Arts for high school students in grades 9-12.

Building on the unparalleled success of the Saturday Community Arts Partnership (CAP) Animation programs for high school students, Inner-City Arts has embarked on an additional series of free after-school and Saturday workshops for middle and high school students. Called Institutes, these are intensive, multi-week workshops in dance choreography, theater arts and comedy.

Filling a Void

With so many cuts in after-school programs, Inner-City Arts' new Visual & Media Arts and Performing Arts Institutes have been able to fill a dangerous void left in the lives of many at-risk youth—that fragile time period between 4 and 7 p.m. when many young people can get into trouble through gangs, crime or drugs, or can themselves become victims of crime.

"The students get themselves to the Inner-City Arts campus from all parts of the city," said Jennifer Carroll, Inner-City Arts program manager. "They do it because these workshops are important to them. They do it because they are learning to take their lives seriously. They do it because they are committed to the others in their group to produce a work of art. They do it because they love it."

Drawing 7th-12th graders from all over Los Angeles, the Institutes are core components of Inner-City Arts' Arts Reach program. The Performing Arts Institute offers 10-week workshops all year in theater, dance and music, focusing on both process and performance. The Visual & Media Arts Institute offers Saturday workshops and provides comprehensive training in the visual and media arts, promoting visual and cultural literacy.

Life's Raw Material

"In the Theater Arts Workshop, the current topic is "What scares you?" continued Jennifer. "We ask the students to really be in the presence of their fear, to draw on the raw material of their lives to create a work of art they never would have known before, a work of art that can move other people."

One young student cried thinking about her grandmother dying. Her fellow classmates acknowledged her for taking a risk. Throughout the workshop she did more exercises to resolve her feelings. Another student is using a workshop to overcome shyness. "Through talking, writing and speaking, the students have a place where they can safely express themselves," added Jennifer.

Others participate because they know it can be stepping stones towards their productive futures. Not only do the participants have access to quality, comprehensive training from professional artists; they develop valuable skills like collaboration, the generation of new ideas and creativity. They also receive connections to the professional arts community.

While the Institute workshops are new this year, enrollment has been steadily increasing and the campus can accommodate up to 930 afterschool and Saturday students.

The impact of the workshops can be felt immediately when you walk into the classes. "The Comedy Class is edgy and hip, and grabs the students immediately," stated Jennifer. "Standup can transform an unorganized, awkward, insecure, marginalized young person into one with stage presence, confidence, a sense of timing and discipline."

So what about a bumper sticker for your life?

DONOR PROFILE

Like Father, Like Son

Michael Schreter, a successful private investor, and his beloved wife, Barbara, joined the Inner-City Arts board of directors in the late 1990s. "The children owned us as soon as we saw them," said Michael, who served as board chair from 2006-2008. After 11 years of dedication to Inner-City Arts, Barbara passed away in 2005.

Wanting to honor her legacy, Michael and his son Jonathan established the Barbara J. Schreter Scholarship Fund. This multi-generational effort provides financial assistance to those students who were inspired by their participation in Inner-City Arts to further their creative or academic endeavors.

"We figured Inner-City Arts had gotten the children this far and inspired them to do something with their lives," said Jonathan, who works in commercial insurance. "We wanted to help further these students' dreams, keep the inspiration alive. Any child who found inspiration at Inner-City Arts is eligible to apply."

To date, the Fund has granted tuition scholarships to eight Inner-City Arts alumni, for a total of \$9,100.

We could endlessly sing the Schreters' praises, but they humbly asked us to focus on the scholarship recipients, each of whom wrote in their winning essay about how Inner-City Arts affected them.

Lupe Perez received the first \$1,500 scholarship in 2006 to study animation at Glendale Community College. She recently graduated and now teaches art at Inner-City Arts. In 2007, Wednesday Torres and Alan Ruiz received scholarships to study animation at Moorpark College and the Art Institute of California, respectively. Gustavo Osorio, Mallory Figueroa and Matthew Moore are the 2008 winners, attending Pasadena City College, Cal State Los Angeles, and Santa Monica College; all have plans to transfer to specialty arts institutes. And 2009 brought scholarships to Amy Lee, attending Chapman College, and Cienna Brown, a Pierce College student.

The Schreters did have one more request of us. Jonathan wanted to make it clear that "anyone can contribute to the fund. Our hope is that the Barbara J. Schreter Scholarship Fund will live in perpetuity, just like the memories of my mother do."



Cienna Brown (L) and Amy Lee receive Barbara J. Schreter scholarships.

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...The slow stale simmer of the florescent lights overhead
Casts a pale glow on staple-blanketed walls,
Student projects checker the classroom
Like band aids over dry, broken skin,
Concealing wounds created by the decades
Cement's held brick by crumbling brick in place...

But the classroom is a swollen belly...

...Mostly Latino and tagged with stereotype-laden doubt-
So they tag back the crumbling walls that hold them in
And etch their names across notebooks
In black ink as a creative release for the lack of
Art classes, reeds, trombones, oboes, trumpets,
Dance intensives, theater workshops and school plays,
In the budget-cut public school curriculum.

Dear Family & Friends,

These are excerpts from an original poem about LAUSD budget cuts that was recited by the authors, Gabriel Cortez and Dario of Get Lit Players, during our 2009 Gala last month.

This poem tells the story you already know. Our schools are in dire straits. Ever since the arts budgets were cut from schools in the 1980s, the situation in our schools has been in decline. But given the recent economy and the state's current budget crisis, it has never been this grim. It is clearly visible in our neighborhood as people jump from the streets to the missions and back onto the streets again. It is life and death now.

Not only are the schools in more trouble than ever before, many after-school programs have been cut as well, compounding our already troubled streets. We know that after school, from 4 to 7 pm, is the most perilous time for students. It is during this window of time that they can get into the most trouble.

Our expanded campus and our ability to serve thousands of more children could not have come at a more crucial point in time. We are especially excited about our new Institutes (see feature story on page 1). To watch the transformation of these young people who come from various schools all over Los Angeles, to see peers come together to form a creative troupe and focus on the work, is unbelievable. By using the arts to develop their human potential and their creativity, they learn what's possible. They are also developing skills that will be highly valued in the future work force, such as development of new ideas, collaboration and creativity.

Where would these students go if they didn't have Inner-City Arts? Thanks to all of our phenomenal donors, supporters, volunteers and community partners, we don't have to find out.



Warmest Regards,

Cynthia

Cynthia S. Harnisch
President and CEO

3 SPOTLIGHT ON Bea Stotzer

Life-Long Board Member Keeps on Giving

"This was the barrio," said Bea Stotzer, reminiscing about Skid Row and Inner-City Arts 20 years ago. "I lived that life. I know what it's like."

Bea grew up extremely poor in Boyle Heights, in a Mexican family of six children. Her father was a jazz musician, and her mother was adamant about Bea and her siblings using art to express themselves—sewing, crafts, music. "My father experienced huge discrimination. The arts are what differentiated my family and helped us to be successful."

One of Inner-City Arts' original board members, Bea was with Bob Bates and Irv Jaeger from the beginning. "In the early days the board performed many staff functions, from writing organizational policies to fundraising and PR," said Bea.

To this day Bea has a pride of ownership in Inner-City Arts. In 2002 she created the organization's National Advisory Board (NAB) with the critical goal of providing objective assessment and assistance to the executive committee and executive director. That same year, Bea moved off of the board of directors to serve on the NAB.

After receiving a CORO Fellowship in Public Affairs, Bea began her career as a public affairs officer for LA Department of Water & Power and KCET Public Television. In 1985 she continued her advocacy work by establishing New Economics for Women (NEW), a highly regarded nonprofit organization dedicated to building assets for poor families through economic development and affordable housing.



With her economic development hat on, Bea expounded on the impact of Inner-City Arts and its expanded campus. "Inner-City Arts has raised the value of this neighborhood, not only stopping the decay of Skid Row, but helping to save thousands of children from entrenched poverty. Every child that comes into this place is saved. The local merchants helped too." Bea recalled Bob Bates gathering metal and wood scraps from them, vowing to turn it into art.

"I was put on this earth for two reasons," continued Bea. "To found NEW and to help create Inner-City Arts. The sacredness of this place and seeing the impact it has on children is indescribable."

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TEACHING ARTISTS PROFILE

Yolanda (Yoli) Gonzalez and Bob Nydam



Sitting with Yoli Gonzalez and Bob Nydam, both visual artists and former Inner-City Arts teaching artists, the Peaches and Herb lyrics *Reunited and it feels so good* come to mind. So does Singin' in the Rain's *Make 'em Laugh*. These two artists, the first to ever work with Bob Bates, taught at Inner-City Arts together in the early 1990s. They had a ton of fun. They recently came back for a teaching reunion, with a special project as the focus.

"When the Staples Center, one of our corporate partners, called asking us to recommend an artist to create their 10th anniversary mural, we immediately referred them to Yoli," said Beth Tishler, Inner-City Arts director of education. "Yoli agreed to the commission, but only on the condition that she could work with Inner-City Arts students."

Simultaneously, as luck would have it, Bob Nydam, who was spending his days running his family's healthcare facilities, called Beth and asked if he could volunteer at Inner-City Arts. He needed to get out of his office and teaching art to our students was the perfect diversion.

Continued on page 4

Yolanda (Yoli) Gonzalez and Bob Nydam

continued from page 3

So this fall, the pair has been teaching visual arts to 6th and 7th graders through creation of the Staples Center mural.

Inner-City Arts touched each of these artists in different ways. "I knew I wanted to be an artist since I was four," said Yoli. "But being the youngest of six in a conservative Mexican-American family, I didn't think I was good enough. Sometimes my culture doesn't do a good job of empowering children. When I met Bob (Bates) and saw that Inner-City Arts is all about empowering children, that was so healing for me." Yoli began teaching and stayed for 14 years.

Bob N., also raised in a conservative family, used art to free his soul. After receiving a degree in fine arts and education from Westmount College in Santa Barbara, Bob N. showed up at the 9th Street School. Bob B. hired him immediately. "It never felt like work to me," said Bob N. "The heart of this place is always right. The happy heart of Bob (Bates) combined with the fierceness and determination of Irv..even 20 years in, this is just the beginning."

One last song comes to mind when listening to Yoli and Bob talk about teaching at Inner-City Arts—Jackson Browne's *Stay... just a little bit longer*.

"When I met Bob (Bates) and saw that Inner-City Arts is all about empowering children, that was so healing for me."

EDUCATOR PROFILE

Mr. Morita Goes to Hollywood



DreamWorks Animation Academy at Inner-City Arts, also screened the film. Last year, *Bottled Up*, also made at Inner-City Arts by Brian's 4th graders, premiered at the same Apple Store, followed by a TV debut on Fox 11's MIDDAY Sunday program with Tony Valdez.

"I wanted to provide my students with a special opportunity," said Brian. "They will remember the premieres forever."

This is all part of Brian's student-centered teaching style, developed while he was enrolled in Inner-City Arts-Annenberg Professional Development program. The program provides teachers with strategies for incorporating creativity into their classroom curriculums through the visual and performing arts.

"Part of the training involved making big movements, screaming out, rolling yourself into a little ball," explained Brian, who earned a B.A. in liberal studies from Cal State LA, and his teaching credential and an M.A. in education from UCLA. "I'm not afraid to act like that in front of my own kids, but I had to learn to be comfortable being wacky in front of my peers. As I continued in the program, I felt much more at ease. The arts made me more comfortable with myself, more creative, and I can transfer that to my students.

"I realized that we have many different tools available—not just books and curriculum guides," added Brian. "There's this package called the arts that got put on the shelf, but the arts can help inspire our kids to find out who they are and feel connected to the classroom. Not only did I learn to bring arts into the classroom, no matter what subject you are teaching, but also to look at situations from different perspectives. There are no wrong or right answers. Each person's voice is valid and is part of who they are."

Brian is now teaching 6th grade at El Sereno. Though only eight years into his career, Brian doesn't want to get into a rut. True to his mission of student-focused teaching, he is co-teaching with a colleague, splitting up the classes between two classrooms and two educators, just so they can give their students a different school experience.

"Inner-City Arts is great for the children and for the teachers," concluded Brian. "The Inner-City Arts professional development program is an experience that every educator should have."

2009 Imagine Gala & Auction

Inner-City Arts celebrated its 20th year with the 2009 Imagine Gala & Auction, on October 15 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Honorees were TV producer Philip Rosenthal, his wife, actress Monica Horan Rosenthal, and their children, Ben and Lily. The event raised over \$575,000 of unrestricted funding that will be used towards keeping Inner-City Arts programming available at no costs to the students.



(L-R) Philip, Monica, Lily and Ben Rosenthal show off Inner-City Arts' Imagine Award.



Inner-City Arts students get into the groove with Los Lobos.



Chef Suzanne Goin (R) of Lucques, Hungry Cat, A.O.C. and Tavern restaurants plated up ricotta and fig jam crostini.



Inner-City Arts co-founders Bob Bates (L) and Irv Jaeger proudly celebrate 20 years of transforming lives through art.



A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the 2009 Barbara J. Schreter Scholarships to Amy Lee and Cienna Brown. Named for former Inner-City Arts board member Barbara Schreter, who passed away in 2005, the scholarships provide financial assistance to students who were inspired by their participation in Inner-City Arts to further their creative or academic endeavors. Schreter's son Jonathan presented the awards.



Everybody Loves Raymond co-stars Ray Romano (L) and Brad Garrett vie for the spotlight once again.



Watercolor mandalas painted by Inner-City Arts students served as the table centerpieces.



Emcee for the evening, comedian and Emmy-nominated actor Paul Reiser, with his wife Paula.



Marissa Jaret Winokur (L), Tony-winning star of *Hairspray*, cozies up to Nia Vardalos, producer and star of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.



Inner-City Arts students hip-hopping with Versa-Style dance troupe.

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