

Neighbor to Neighbor

November 2006



Inner-City Neighborhood Art House
201 East Tenth Street
Erie, Pennsylvania 16503
(814)455-5508
www.eriebenedictines.org/arthouse

Annual Fundraiser—Taste of the Arts

Thursday, September 21, 2006

Hats Off to the Arts!

HONORARY HOSTS



Susan Kemenyffy



Joe Wiczorek



Vitus Kaiser



Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB



Cheryl Bates, Neighborhood Art House Development Staff, with student artist, Maria Samusenko, whose oil pastel, *Women in the Garden*, is auctioned during Taste of the Arts.



Charla Leemhuis dons a hat created by a Neighborhood Art House student.



Lenora and David Lewis join over 300 supporters of the Neighborhood Art House at the fundraising event.

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHARES VISION OF ART HOUSE

(Excerpt from Sister Anne Wambach's talk at Taste of the Arts)

I invite you to join me and the children in what I call our daily gathering. What I have chosen to use for "gathering" captures what I value here and why we ask you to be part of our Art House family.

Each day for the past 11 years the children, the teachers and I begin our time together like this.

May my mind think no harm,

May my lips speak no harm,

May my hands do no harm.

May the children of tomorrow

Bless the work I offer.

(Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB)



Sister Anne

I selected this poem

because when the children go to one of the 30 classes that we offer here each day, I want them to remember that what they are creating with their minds, hearts and hands is contributing to a better self, a better world, a better tomorrow.

I follow the poem with

*I pledge allegiance to the earth and all its sacred parts,
its water, land and living things and all its human hearts.*

*I pledge allegiance to all life and promise I shall care
to love and cherish all its gifts with people everywhere.*

I love it that each day the children have this thought floating through their minds:

I pledge to cherish all life— to cherish myself,
to cherish my friends, my family, all people on earth
and the earth itself.

And finally, the children join in song

We are part of a circle that will last forever.

Welcome to our circle that is bound forever in love.

(Ray Repp)

I believe this song welcomes each child into a safe and warm circle of love and teaches them that they are part of a vibrant, ever-expanding fabric of life.

I believe our gathering session sets the tone for this little miracle on East 10th street. You make our circle possible and you complete our circle. You are a vital part of the circle of love that the children sing about each afternoon.

Sister Anne

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Neighborhood Art House children perform for the guests.

OUR PARTNERS

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MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Brady Louis

Sister Anne Wambach, center, with Audrey and Bill Hirt at Taste of the Arts.



The Boys Talk

"I'm 52-years-old, I'm raising three children. You've got me for 45 minutes. OK, now what do you want to know?"

That's how Dale McBrier began his new class during the fall term at the Art House.

The class, *Boy Talk*, is geared to 10- to 14-year-olds and was initiated in partnership with the Erie-based national organization, The Ophelia Project. The goal of *Boy Talk* is to get young boys to talk about their lives and anything that's bothering them, from dealing with girls to fighting with others.

Although this is his first teaching experience, McBrier said that dealing with children at the Neighborhood Art House is not much



Dale McBrier with *Boy Talk* participants

different from dealing with his own children; a 12-year-old daughter in seventh grade and two sons, 20- and 22-years-old.

"All kids have pretty much the same concerns."

The secret to teaching young boys, according to McBrier, is to capture their interest as quickly as possible. "They are easily distracted so you have to draw them in early."

So far in his classes, McBrier said there emerged what he calls "crystalline moments" when he caught their interest

During the first class, the young boys were engaged by a discussion of family problems one of the young men was experiencing.

Another such moment was one young man's experiences with a young girl who made him feel bad.

McBrier said the key to the class is to get the young men talking. The only rule, according to McBrier, a long-time supporter of the Neighborhood Art House, is that all discussions are kept within the group.

McBrier also tries to teach the young men in his class a lesson for life: "You know right from wrong in your heart and if you choose the right path you'll be OK."

Boy Talk is one of the Ophelia Project classes at the Neighborhood Art House. The Art House also joins with Ophelia for *Girl Talk*, *Star Class* and *Girls Write*.



Shania's seventh birthday was extra special this year.

The Art House community—students and teachers alike—gathered at the beginning of classes to sing "Happy Birthday" to her and to present her with a small gift on her seventh birthday.

The day was special because at seven, Shania was allowed to attend the Art House

Happy Birthday Everybody

with her older brother.

Young people like Shania , whose siblings attend classes, keep hearing about the Art House and they can't wait until they can join too, according to Executive Director Benedictine Sister Anne Wambach.

"We try to make the day memorable for them by welcoming them into the Art House community," said Sr. Anne. "Actually, we remember the birthday of all our children and staff throughout the year by celebrating with them during gathering time."

So, happy birthday everybody.

Raves for Expansion

We've all seen the signs on the highways: "Temporary inconvenience; permanent improvement."

That phrase from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation certainly was true at the Inner-City Art House.

Four new studios were included in the renovation of the space formerly occupied by Emmaus Food Pantry on the eastside of the Art House.

The improvements were especially appreciated by the teachers.

"The new studio is good for me," said Vitaly Volchansky, who leads his string classes in one of the new studios. "It's very comfortable and private and I'm glad to have it."

"It's a nice cozy, private room where the children aren't distracted," said crafts teacher Cathy Miller. "The children have plenty of room to work comfortably and quietly. Everything they need is right here."

"Now I get to hang the children's work on the walls and the students can listen to classical and contemporary music," said Cheryl Robinson, who teaches fashion design and sewing.

The improvements literally have been a ray of sunshine for art teacher Mary Lubowicki, who teaches in the front portion of the Art House, near the front entrance, where three classes are now held instead of the five or six held there before the renovation.

"We get a good view of the outside and a lot of sunshine," said Lubowicki. "It's good for the students."



The new strings room at the Neighborhood Art House

HIGHMARK Creates "Sparks"

James Martin, Community Affairs Director for Highmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield presented a check for \$15,000 to the Neighborhood Art House in support of its nutritional, fitness, and wellness programs.

In conjunction with Highmark, the Art House has initiated a dance/fitness program called SPARKS (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids) designed to teach children to become "lifelong movers" and help them to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Martin, second from left, presented the check to Sister Anne Wambach, OSB, Executive Director, Larisa Melodinskaia, dance instructor and Sister Mary Lee Farrell, grantwriter for the Neighborhood Art House. Representing the students were, from left, Kailynn Banks, Cassie Zatkiewicz, Natasha Ramos, Shania Deckert.

Melodinskaia and Farrell attended the training workshop for the SPARKS program held in Johnstown on September 13.

The Neighborhood Art House was also one of the recipients of the first annual Triathlon Fund-raiser—a bike, swim and run event at Presque Isle State Park sponsored by Highmark in September.



Student Art Festival Awards

Jeremiah Richardson 11 received a **First Place** award for his collage entry, and **Emilia Balos 9** won **Second Place** for a 2-color block entered in the Children's Off-Site Category of the Erie Summer Festival of the Arts. Both students received a ribbon and art set. **Honorable Mention** prize ribbons were awarded to **Jordan Gates 10** and **Samantha Cortes 9** for their entries in collage; **Alajuawn Brewton 11** for his drawing; and **Slava Kleshchevnikov 8** for his 2-color block print. The students' art instructor was Mary Lubowicki of the Neighborhood Art House.

Other Grants Received

Snee-Rheinhardt Foundation, Pittsburgh —\$5,000 toward renovation of Art House

Shuster Re-grant Initiative at Gannon University —\$2,000 forequipment/supplies for new art studio

Hilton Fund for Sisters —\$7,500 toward salary for grant writer

Erie Arts Endowment of the Arts Council of Erie —\$293 - PA Partners in the Arts for workshop, "The Creative Process" by Passle Helminski

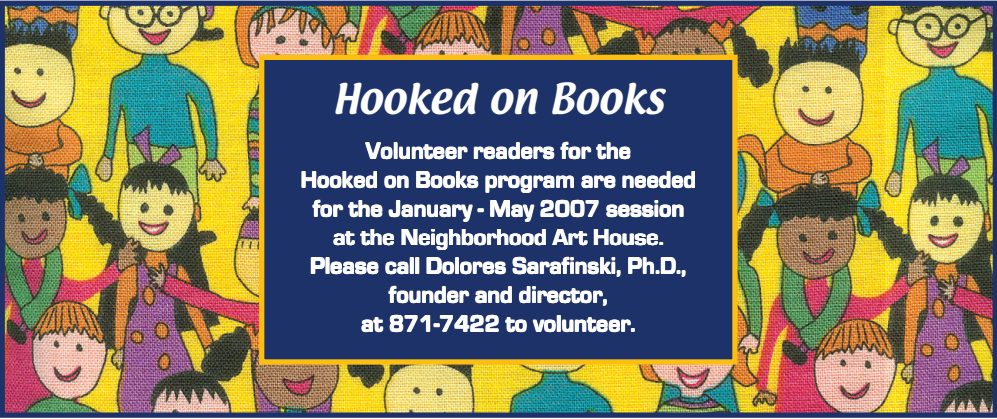
Clarence E. Byers Performance Fund —\$1,928 for Open House performance in December and Winter/Spring Piano and Strings Concert

McCain Unrestricted Fund —\$3,815 for general support

Tax Credits



First National Bank executives, Tom Wedzik, regional president (left) and David Slomski, vice president, presents Sister Anne Wambach, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Art House with a check for \$5,000 in tax credits from the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Also contributing tax credits to the Neighborhood Art House this year were Erie Insurance Group, PNC Bank, Waste Management, Inc., Marquette Savings Bank and an anonymous donor. Information on tax credits can be found at www.NewPa.com.



Hooked on Books

Volunteer readers for the Hooked on Books program are needed for the January - May 2007 session at the Neighborhood Art House. Please call Dolores Sarafinski, Ph.D., founder and director, at 871-7422 to volunteer.