

Young artists' work featured at Mill City celebration

By Denise Ruttan

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Proud parent Bob Beldon pointed out his son, Matthew, 16, at the Santiam Hearts to Arts artist's reception, part of Mill City's Fourth of July festivities.

"He's a third-place winner," Bob Beldon said.

Matthew Beldon wrote a poem about friendship and family for the yearlong poetry and art contest, which was organized by the Mill City arts nonprofit.

"It was cool," Matthew Beldon said. "It gets kids out there and it shows them there's something more than fighting and doing drugs. The reason is to show the love."

This is the first year for the project, which was spearheaded by Santiam Hearts to Arts to stimulate arts education in a small rural school district without the budget for a formal arts program, president Renate Medley said.

For the past year, Santiam School District students composed poetry and drew illustrations in their classrooms. Art was created in the theme of "Peace and Acceptance." The Hearts to Arts District Wide Poetry and Art Contest culminated in the gallery showing at the Fourth of July festival grounds and a reception for the young artists who won the contest, as well as anyone who wanted to participate.

Medley said she started the project — and the nonprofit organization — to raise awareness of the value of arts education. She said children do not all learn in the same way, and arts can enhance the learning environment.

"I was one of those out-of-the box kids, and if I hadn't had the arts I probably wouldn't have stayed in school," Medley said.

At the gallery showing, younger and older students were paired with each other, and poems and drawings matched randomly. Medley designed the layout for the final products on her computer.

"Our primary goal was to get the students' artwork in front of the public and get people excited about art. Arts education is not going to happen unless enough people are on board," Medley said.

Brittany Grenbemer, 8, produced a poem and a drawing as part of the project. Her art and poetry were about playing fair and sharing with others.



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Student art and poetry was featured in a gallery setting with an afternoon reception as part of Mill City's Fourth of July festivities. Santiam Canyon School District students created the art in a year-long contest led by Mill City arts nonprofit Santiam Hearts to Arts.

Festivities

In Mill City, the Hearts to Arts gallery showing was part of the town's Fourth of July celebration. Bed races, vendor booths, music, fireworks, street dances and food were only part of the festivities.

"Doing the project was really fun. It made me think about how I should have been a nicer person this year and could be nicer next year," Grenbemer said.

About 50 percent of the district's students participated in contest. Medley plans to continue the project next year and hopes even more teachers will encourage their classrooms to participate.

For more information about Hearts to Arts, go to www.heartstoarts.org.

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