

SanTan Sun News

Vision Kids Classes Link Artists, Creative Kids

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By Colleen Sparks

Managing Editor

Children and teens can get a new perspective on art when they create their own masterpieces under the guidance of professional artists in a free Chandler program.

The Vision Gallery provides free art classes for those ages 6 to 16 January through May, then August through December in its Vision Kids program. Youths explore a variety of mediums in the classes at Vision Gallery, 10 E. Chicago St.

"We have done everything from movie making to Native American drum making and we used actual deer skins," said Yvonne Villareal-Torres, visual arts assistant for Vision Gallery.

"We do ceramics, water colors. Our only real rule is a parent or guardian has to stay with them in class," she added. "The parents can learn the techniques and be able to go home and recreate the project. A lot of times it's the grandparent that brings them. It fosters that relationship. It shows a vested interest in the arts."

The classes meet on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon and then 1 to 3 p.m. The same class repeats in order to accommodate kids' busy schedules.

The next Vision Kids class will be the "Create a 3-Dimensional Perspective with Marco Albarran" at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Jan. 12. In that workshop, students will learn the basics of space selection and design processes used in design and architecture.

Children and teens can also participate in the "Fast Image Transfer on Clear Plexiglass with Anthony Banayat" class at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Jan. 26. In that course, students will learn how to apply image transfers to surfaces, as well as basic composition techniques to make artwork appropriate for framing.

A call for artists to teach the classes is made at the beginning of the year.

"We're always looking for something new that the kids haven't experienced yet," Villareal-Torres said. "Some instructors have taught with us for years, they're highly requested."

One of frequent Vision Kids artist-teacher is Emily Costello, whom the Arizona Lottery chose to be its first artist in residence for the current fiscal year.



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Another artist teaching Vision Kids classes is Christy Puetz, who creates pieces using beads including animals. Puetz is also a Scottsdale teacher and the creative program director for Beads of Courage, an arts program for children who have serious illnesses.

Artist Sylvia Fugmann Brongo often leads Vision Kids classes. A clay artist since 1983, Fugmann Brongo creates clay vases, bowls and wall pieces using stoneware clay and mostly slab form, as well as coil pieces by hand, her website said.

Students also often have a chance to learn from artist Sandra Luehrsen, who offers clay workshops and teaches 3D design at Mesa Community College, as well as shows her sculpture and digital artwork locally, nationally and internationally, according to her website.

At a class last month, students took the Cubist Portrait Painting with Reggie Casillas class, where they created portraits in the styles of artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Villareal-Torres said Casillas is "a wonderful portrait artist" and "very talented."

"Every week is different," she said. "Every class is different. Some will repeat in future years because kids are like, 'can we please?' If we can, we bring it back. I try to keep it different so it's not monotonous."

Ricardo and Myra Felix of Chandler enroll their children - Lia, 17, and Aiden, 14 - in the Vision Kids program. Lia, a senior at Perry High School, and Aiden, a freshman at Perry, have taken many art classes for several years. Lia started taking Vision Kids classes when she was about 8.

"It's just a wonderful program because it provides her an opportunity to work with our local artists in different mediums," Myra said. "We really love that. Yvonne chooses the best people. She chooses a lovely selection of artists and gives the kids an opportunity to participate in so many different things."

As a teacher who instructs special education students at Chandler Traditional Academy - Humphrey Campus, Myra said art is "extremely important."

"Not everyone's going to be a doctor," she said.

Myra said Lia especially loved a Vision Kids class where she and other students made dolls.

Ricardo said the classes are "amazing" and it is great professional artists in the community teach them.

"You get the sense that they really enjoy it; the artists do, and the kids do, too," he said. "Yvonne is incredible. The staff is always great. I think it's a blessing to our community. It's something that hopefully we can continue to have."

The Vision Kids program began in 1997 and is supported financially by individuals, grants and corporations. Anyone in the Valley can take the classes for free. Students come from all over the Valley.

The children and teens get all the materials they need in class to create their artwork and take it home. Usually about 36 youths take the classes each Saturday and the Vision Kids program serves about 2,000 kids a year.

Vision Kids is a program of the Chandler Cultural Foundation. The Vision Gallery is owned by the City of Chandler and is managed by the Chandler Cultural Foundation.

People can register their children for up to three Vision Kids classes per season. They can stop by from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. today at Vision Gallery, 10 E. Chicago St., to register their kids in classes. Or they can register anytime during regular office hours at Vision Gallery or by calling 480-782-2697.

Information: visiongallery.org/vision-kids/

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