



COURTESY PHOTO

Kids decorate kites such as the one above at ArtWalk on the Bay's KidsWalk. The kites are then donated to a Mexican orphanage.

ArtReach = fewer blue-faced kids

By MARTIN JONES WESTLIN | DOWNTOWN NEWS

If you're already familiar with ArtWalk – and unless you spend your springs in Nome, you've heard of it – you probably know something about its seasonal cousin. ArtWalk on the Bay, patterned after the outdoor fine arts festival that brings Little Italy to a halt one weekend in April, is set to run Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 13 and 14 at Embarcadero Marina Park North Downtown. Founded in 2006, ArtWalk on the Bay will feature the work of more than 100 artists whose pieces are for sale and whose creators are always eager to meet their new patrons.

The festival gets a lot of mileage from

the original ArtWalk, which boasts an annual attendance of six figures – but it also spearheads a community service targeted at a captive audience nine months out of the year. ArtReach, begun last fall at Garfield Elementary School in North Park, offers a visual art experience to kindergartners through sixth-graders throughout San Diego County.

"ArtReach is a logical outgrowth of ArtWalk," ArtWalk managing director Sandi Cottrell said. "ArtReach is ArtWalk's way of giving back to the community by addressing the great need for art education in the schools. We believe art is a necessity in children's lives, not a luxury."

Wholesale study results reflect that children learn more quickly and retain information longer when the arts are involved in their curricula. For program founder Cottrell, those results translate into real-life interactions in the classroom.

"You can really identify the kids who've had some art in their lives," Cottrell said, "whether it be from an after-school program or from their parents at home or if they've had teachers that teach them art. They're very confident and comfortable. They pick up the materials and start creating."

"You see kids who are clearly very

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uncomfortable and say, 'I don't know how to do this.' 'I can't do this'; we do try to make those children comfortable in the short time we have with them.

"As we go forward," Cottrell said, "we'll expand the curriculum a lot. [This month], we'll be looking at different activities we can do with the children. The first year was really going into the schools and looking at the logistics, how we keep the kids from having blue faces at the end of the day."

ArtWalk on the Bay has its younger attendees covered as well, chiefly through KidsWalk. This area offers hands-on educational art activities for kids and their families, including participation in a drum circle and creation of an art project made of recyclable materials. There's also a kite-coloring project wherein the finished product is donated to an orphanage in Mexico.

Meanwhile, Cottrell said, ArtReach intends to found a scholarship program.

"To this point, we've had to charge the schools," Cottrell said. "As we have increasing funds, we'll be doing scholarships for schools that can't afford it."

This year's ArtWalk on the Bay will feature two entertainment areas with live music, featuring acts such as The Coyote Problem, Jordan Reimer and Kim DiVine. And "Artes de Mexico" will feature the work of 12 artists from south of the border.

For more information on ArtWalk on the Bay, visit www.artwalkonthebay.org or call 615-1090.