

# PASADENA STAR-NEWS

[Click here to go back to search results.](#)

## Pasadena Star-News (CA)

August 7, 2010

**Section:** News

### Altadena volunteer shows off kids' works of art

*Janette Williams, Staff Writer*

ALTADENA - Using art to open up and enrich children's lives is nothing new. But a new program at Five Acres, The Boys & Girls Aid Society of Los Angeles County, goes beyond handing out paint, paper and brushes to children whose lives so far have been harder than most. A group of about seven kids, ages 10 to 14, meets once a week to learn about famous artists' lives, styles and place in history - and then creates an artist-inspired work of his or her own.

"Most of them are learning about (the artists) for the first time, and they're blown away," said volunteer Melissa Hogan, who leads the group in the "Create Now" program. "They're learning to see things in a different way. They have posters around school, but they don't know the story behind 'Starry Night.' Now they know the story of Van Gogh - and his ear - and can be inspired by that style."

Hogan, a window designer at Nortstrom's in Arcadia, said she tries to use her art background to make it fun as well as educational.

"The focus is on art history, learning about the artist and going and making our art afterward," she said. "I did a slide show, and talked about the different art - and they found out they loved it."

When the group learned about Renoir and saw examples of his and other Impressionists' work, they did their own versions, Hogan said.

"We ran around campus finding things to add to our still life arrangement," she said. "Since it was our second class, I asked them what an 'impression' was, and then gave them my first impression of them. They really enjoyed the compliments!"

There could be some solace for kids in the often troubled lives of artists and how they see things differently, Hogan said. "We bring in a wide variety of artists, and focus on one at a time - people from all different backgrounds, people that had happy upbringings and people that had a lot of tragedy in their lives."

But, she said, "I present it completely for fun, I'm not an art therapist."

In addition to their Renoir-inspired works, the students have portrayed iconic Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's prized parrots, used found objects and bubble-wrap to create art-works. They even tried some sculpture using the bread-dough recipe from Japanese-American artist Ruth Asawa, Hogan said.

"It's amazing how talented some of them are," she said, mentioning one 14-year-old girl who can "look at anything and recreate it in 3-D" using the dough as clay.

The kids' individual personalities have "definitely" come out along the way, Hogan said.

"Some respond more to 3-D, and one kid always wanted to wear everything and make it into a costume. Everything ended up on his head," she said, laughing.

"I used to think (volunteering) was something I'd never have time for, but it was something I'd always wanted to do," she said. "You have way more time than you think you do think do ... and even if you're having the worst day, the kids bring a smile to your face."

janette.williams@sgvn.com

626-578-6300, ext. 4482

IF YOU GO

WHAT: **Art Exhibit** featuring the work of students at

Five Acres, The Boys & Girls Society of L.A.

WHEN: Sept.4 through Sept.30; opening reception 4-6p.m. Sept.4

WHERE: Altadena Library Community Room, 600 E. Mariposa St.; 626-798-0833

For information on Five Acres, including volunteering, call 626-798-6793 or go to [fiveacres.org](http://fiveacres.org)

[Photo:](#)

[An exhibit of work of students from 5 Acres: The Boys & Girls Society of Los Angeles - painted at a program focusing on famous artists, their style, and their place in history - will be on display starting Sept. 4 at Altadena Library. The painting shown is based on the work of Frida Kahlo, and is the artist's impression of one of the Mexican icon's pet parrots.](#)

(c) 2010 Pasadena Star-News. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Media NewsGroup, Inc. by NewsBank, Inc.