

Kids Train in Arts

"What We Want the World to Look Forward To"

By Janet Reed

If you happened to receive a fax full of scolding white-faced creatures coming across the highway on your way to work, can't be blamed. Now Haven is not being invaded by the use of Star Wars. What you saw was the Earth Best Citizens, the artist groups sponsored by the Mayor's Committee of the Arts.

The Committee is part of the federally funded CETA (Comprehensive Training and Employment Act) Summer Youth Employment Program, designed to give disadvantaged youth the chance to develop skills and work experience.

Throughout the year, CETA has had to determine the real action that action should be seen and not paid, by hiring new youth artists to appear that promote talents for the benefit of the city. Last year the Mayor's Committee on the Arts was directed by Mayor Frank Lopez and arts advisor Chasity Brown, to provide jobs, not only for professional artists, but also for economically disadvantaged youth. "The program is unique," says this year's coordinator Bill Brown, "because the professionals don't do the performance. The kids are paid to draw and design their own costumes. Being paid reinforces their confidence in themselves and their art."

The summer's art program began July 7 and ends August 24. Bill Brown, himself a sculptor, has been working for three months designing the costumes, buying artists and materials, passing a budget, obtaining work sites, and leaving out everybody's problems. All the planning is paying off

now that CETA artists are painting, acting, singing, dancing, and modeling up a storm (with costumes) all over the city. "The excellent response we're getting from the community," says Bill, "tells me that people are pleased and interested in the program."

Maria Corwin, an member in the music program, agrees that the public appreciates their artistic endeavors. "You can tell the people did our work," he says, "because nobody writes their names on them."

Tony L'Escaze and Paul Rowack direct the music program. "This is the first group of students we've worked with," says Tony. "They've done several before so they know what they're doing."

"The results are a 'less of dialogue about what's happening a 'richer world,'" adds Keith. "We try to get beyond teaching people just to punch in, punch out and do it. It's to be told on their own. It's to see the everyday world. We encourage the group to create the everyday world and not look to change it."

Currently, studios at Lee High School are painting "Path of the World," a mural depicting the road from ignorance and violence to enlightenment. "When we paint in our work," Maria explains, "it's what we want the world to look forward to."

In another visual arts program, the photographer group, the children are now photographing other CETA job sites and performances, also opening a few walls to their cameras with the exception, "I was amazed at how quickly these people caught on," says Director Richard Quirk. "Many want to stay late and work in the darkness



Two Earth Best Citizens, participants in the CETA Summer Arts Program.
By Janet Reed/Photo

to help me out. They're interested, which is half the battle." Some of the students would like to be professional photographers and others are considering art as a career. "A photographer, like an artist, has to get things in a two-dimensional way," says Susan Beattie, an aspiring artist, "so it helps to learn both."

After the first few weeks of intensive training, members in the performing arts "try both" their city with free public shows at such places as neighborhood houses, neighborhood houses, parks, beaches, summer camps, shopping centers and the New Haven Green. Each of the groups does at least one show for the mayor in front of City Hall. After the successful performance of the theater and music groups, Lopez decided he'd allow his "new talents and their talents," heavily demonstrated through the making of a full-day-music.

The theater program is directed by Kelley O'Rourke, a member of the Long Walk Theater staff. "This program really needs to

be directed from the top of City Hall," Kelley says. "We're learning how to be professionals and how to appear as people."

Currently the group is performing two pieces. The first, a family show entitled *A Day at the Park*, incorporates dance, folk, two African and one also African. All of the blocking and dialogue was created through improvisation. "It's fun to take stories and turn them into a play," says another Paul Hill.

The other show is a reader's theater piece based on poems by Langston Hughes. The last poem begins, "When I get to be a composer, I'm gonna write me some music about depression in Alabama." "That poem," Kelley says, "describes the feeling we're being working to create all summer."

The CETA theater and dance programs are presented out of Lee High School. South Lee Dunlap, director of the school, and William

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