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## **YOUNG ARTIST EXHIBITION CELEBRATES 15 YEARS AS HIGHLIGHT OF FESTIVAL'S YOUTH ARTS PROGRAM**

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The Young Artist Exhibition is celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> year at the 2010 Omaha Summer Arts Festival. The annual exhibition of student artwork was founded in partnership with art educator Cathy Witt in 1995. The intention was to highlight school-based arts education while encouraging youth to pursue the visual arts by giving them an opportunity to display their work.

The exhibition was first held at the Omaha Ballet Dance Studio, then moved to The Rose and finally to the W. Dale Clark Library located at 215 South 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The event has grown so much that a second venue was added two years ago for high school-level work at the Artists' Cooperative Gallery, 405 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Upper-elementary and middle school work will be featured on the fourth floor of the library. Both exhibitions, sponsored by Target and Qwest, will be presented on Saturday, June 26 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, June 27, from noon to 5 p.m.

"My favorite part of the whole experience is watching a student, with their family, friends and teacher present, accepting accolades for their achievement," Witt said. "The look of pride on their faces is priceless. Over the course of the weekend the students return again and again with more friends and family to see their art on display."

Children and teens of all skills levels in grades six through 12 are invited each year to submit original artwork for inclusion in the exhibition. Categories of submissions include clay, drawing, graphics/printmaking, 3-D mixed media, painting and sculpture. Framing services have been generously donated by Mangelsens for all 15 years of the exhibition. Ginger's Hang Up has also donated thousands of dollars worth of framing services over the years.

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The efforts of these young artists will be celebrated at two special receptions. At the Artists' Cooperative Gallery on Saturday, June 26, at 10:30 a.m., high school students will be recognized at the Young Artist Exhibition Awards Brunch. All students, art educators, families and friends are invited to attend the event at which more than \$2,000 in scholarships, merit awards, framing and art supplies will be presented and a continental breakfast buffet will be served.

Elementary and middle school students will receive certificates of recognition and are invited to participate in a raffle to win art supplies at the W. Dale Clark Library on Sunday, June 27 at 3:30 p.m. Students, teachers, families and friends will enjoy cookies and lemonade following the awards presentation.

Last year, the Young Artist Exhibition began presenting a "Teacher of the Year" award. "I thought this would be a great gesture to support the art educators who have tirelessly entered the exhibit at the end of the year when they could have easily closed their art room doors for the summer," Witt explained.

This year's "Teacher of the Year" is Kim Cooper of North High School. Cooper is retiring to his Ashland, NE studio and gallery following a 35-year career of teaching art. His influence will be felt for years to come as seven of his former art students are currently teaching art in Omaha area schools. Cooper will accept his award at the Young Artist Exhibition Awards Brunch.

For more information regarding the Omaha Summer Arts Festival presented by First National Bank and the Young Artist Exhibition sponsored by Target and Qwest, please visit [www.SummerArts.org](http://www.SummerArts.org).

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