

LAFAYETTE ARTS & SCIENCE FOUNDATION

About LASF: *Contra Costa SUN* Article

Fastframe gift makes kids' art show possible

Students are chosen at random to have creations made presentation-ready

By Barbara Millman Cole

LASF MEDIA LIAISON

LAFAYETTE Arts and Science's annual Luck of the Draw is aptly named. Twenty-four students, one per grade at each elementary school in Lafayette, have their names drawn from a hat during the spring LASF Art Fairs. Their sketches, prints and paintings are then professionally framed by Fastframe of Lafayette.

Anthony Ruiz, Fastframe's owner, wanted to donate his skills as a framer for LASF art programs. When Kathy Bowles, then chairwoman of the board and former president of LASF, came into his shop in 2002 to have something framed, he proposed the idea to her. She took it to Carolyn Ockels, then LASF head representative for K-5 programs. Shortly thereafter, Ruiz, Bowles and Ockels put together this noncompetitive event.

"What I love about Luck of the Draw is that the art is not graded or judged. Names are randomly picked so everyone has a chance," says Ruiz.

The show opened Oct. 22 at Fastframe of Lafayette Gallery where the artwork will be displayed through early November. Then, the show will move to the Town Hall Theatre for the holiday season. In early January, the art show will move to Chow's and remain through February. Papillion will display the artwork in March, before sending it back to the schools in April, where it will hang in the school offices until being returned to the children at the Art Fairs. Then, new winners will be chosen for next year.

"We wanted to celebrate the kids as artists," said Ockels. "The idea of having a traveling show keeps the display available for public viewing longer. We chose public venues where children frequent so kids could see their classmates' drawings on display."

This is the fourth year for the event which has picked up momentum and is becoming well-known in the community.

"It takes two weeks of work to frame the twenty-four pieces chosen," said Ruiz. "My co-worker, Mary Hurley, and I design the frame for each drawing before the actual construction begins. It may take us two to four sessions until we hit on the right design. Each of us plays customer if you will. We go all out to match the drawing with the best framing design. When all the works are completed, we design the wall space to show the art to its best advantage."

Ruiz treats each drawing like a professional piece of work. "If the blue canvas at MOMA is valid, then the sponge painting created by a kindergartner is valid. Just as much creative effort goes into that painting, even if the artist is only six years old.

"We try not to enhance or distract, so much as marry the piece with the framing. For instance, when we chose the frame for the tennis shoe drawing, we picked one with a shoelace motif. It's the presentation that matters."

Ruiz plans to continue working with LASF. He enjoys giving back to the community and also donates frames for school auction projects, class projects, and special school works. He estimates his donated frames have helped raise \$50,000 for area schools.

"I'm a kid at heart," says Ruiz. "Kids are my passion. It's just wonderful to see how children respond to seeing their drawings framed and on display. They think it's really cool."