

Arts in the Middle

By Earle G. Bidwell, Assistance Executive Director

Two days after graduation, the studios of the Hartford Art School at the University of Hartford were alive with activity as one hundred and forty four of Connecticut's best middle level artists and art teachers participated in a daylong fine arts conference. Two years of planning culminated in opportunities for students to create art projects under the direction of high caliber practicing artist from Connecticut, Boston and New York City. Working from a choice of twelve different artistic mediums, each student was able to finish two different creations during the day.

Students were able to choose from among copper sculpture, hot wax batik, pastels, computer arts drawing, cartooning, acrylic & mixed media, graphic design, hand color photography watercolor, oil portraiture and abstractions in professional studios spread out over three buildings of the Hartford Art School.



The purposes for the conference were to:

- offer middle school art students high caliber artistic challenges
- give statewide visibility to the fine arts and promote the arts among middle school students
- provide opportunities for art students from diverse backgrounds to work together
- give middle level art teachers opportunities to refine their skills and create their own artwork.

For several years the Connecticut Association of Schools has recognized high school artists at the Arts Recognition Banquet and recently instituted the Elementary Arts Festival. What was lacking was a program for middle schools. Several artists, art teachers and middle level administrators responded to the call and Arts in the Middle was born. Credit is due the diligent, hard-working committee that saw this project from its inception to fruition. They are: Vaughn Ramseur, Principal Roosevelt Middle School,

New Britain, Committee Chairman; Maureen Bercik, University of Connecticut; Andrea Haas, Artist/Teacher, Silas Deane Middle School, Wethersfield; Joanne Hunter, Artist, The Art Spot, Brookfield; Denise Malnoti, Art Department Chair, Windsor Public Schools; Barbara Ripa, Principal, Ellington Middle School; Joyce St. Germaine, Artist/Teacher, King Philip Middle School, West Hartford; Meg Shea, Artist/Teacher, Roosevelt Middle School, New Britain; Rochelle Schwartz, Assistant Principal, Litchfield Jr/Sr High School.



CAS is also indebted to The Hartford Art School of the University of Hartford and especially to Assistant Dean Robert Calafiore, for hosting the event. Their assistance and support was above and beyond anything expected and added immeasurably to the success of the experience.