

Art Club impacting students, community and alumni

She realized the impact and importance of the collaboration when one of her art class students was simply given a sketchbook to draw. In the past, that student has drawn on the back of store receipts.

“This humbling experience made me not only realize how lucky I am to have the liberty to take sketchbooks for granted, but also introduced me to the persistence of their ambitions,” says Maginnis, a double major at Dominican in art history and psychology who is studying abroad in the Netherlands this spring semester. “I greatly benefitted from the connections I have made with the children.”

The Art Club is a three-year-old program created by the [Department of Art, Art History and Design](#). Held at the Albert Boro Community Center in the Canal district in San Rafael, it provides quality arts education for local youth. It is made possible through an art education grants from the Marin Community Foundation and U.S. Bank and an ongoing partnership with the City of San Rafael Community Services with the support of Steve Mason, director of the Boro Center.

As paid interns, studio and graphic art majors from Dominican work alongside art alumna Julie Nakao to teach a carefully designed 12-week visual art curriculum that features field trips to museums in the San Francisco Bay Area.

“Our students become really attached to those kids. It’s a special group. They are extremely grateful for what they get in the program and the interns create a bond with them,” says Nakao, ’07, Community Arts Project Coordinator who majored in digital art at Dominican.

Our interns/teachers are seeing a confidence level shift. These are kids who are not necessarily getting some of the same opportunities as other students. The exposure, the confidence, the skill and abilities they get opens a lot of doors. – Julie Nakao

For Dominican graduate Kenyon Anderson, the Art Club experience has inspired him to pursue a career in teaching art and working as a studio practitioner.

“Learning to work with kids is real fun and also challenging. I still have a lot to learn but, without the Art Club, I probably wouldn’t have found my interest in teaching,” says Anderson, who is currently considering four graduate schools to earn his Masters of Fine Arts degree.

For Dominican junior Maggie Hibert, the Art Club provided her with an insight through each child’s personal journal as to how important art programs are in the educational system.

“It was a great chance to see their imagination grow and to help, in my opinion, develop divergent thinking,” says Hibert, who also aspires to be an art teacher. “Children need art programs to express themselves and to provide an opportunity to be creative. The world is surrounded by art and they should have a chance to learn about it.”

In three years, Dominican’s Art Club has progressed from recruiting members to join to now a creating waiting list to sign up. Students have helped middle school children participate in a number of projects. They created posters for the Mill Valley Film Festival and attended the event to see a free screening of their work. On January 11, children from the Art Club class participated in a California Film Institute workshop led by presenters from Croatia. This partnership with the CFI’s Education Program will give them access to supplies, filming equipment and studios.

“What’s been great is we can outreach at this point. Our program is now recognized by a larger audience and the kids are being offered a better opportunity,” Nakao says. “We’re touching a lot of people and expanding their knowledge and opportunities.”

This year the Marin Community Foundation asked the Art Club to focus on professional development in cultural humility/competency. In addition to alumni mentorship from Nakao in arts instruction and curriculum design, the student interns also participate in the Education Dedicated to Justice and Equity (EDJE) scholar workshops with Michael James, a local grass roots teacher-educator. They meet five times a semester – sharing their experiences and concerns with James while focusing on leadership development and “Education as a Practice of Social Change.”

The Art Club has been so successful that a similar model has been established for a Dominican Dance Club with BFA in Dance alumnae Casey Thorne ‘10. The goal now for Nakao is to expand the work space and the number of student interns (currently two per semester to teach 20 children) who can join Art Club. Some of those students, such as Maginnis, have volunteered their own time to help the children even after their internship has ended.

“I continue to offer my time because I get something out of it by giving. The connections I have made are lasting and meaningful,” Maginnis says. “It has been miraculous watching the growth and improvement of each exhibit alone. Each semester, there is more emphasis on teamwork and collaboration as well as creative work. It’s great to see which students prosper and where. The children have stepped up to the challenges and blossomed with each new task.”