

## Picture Perfect

A walk to the Boys & Girls Club. A basketball game. A pool of water. All are transformed by the camera lens and a young person's imagination. Not only is photography a powerful developmental, educational and vocational tool, it is also widely recognized as a rewarding creative pursuit for at-risk youth.

Fortunately, Boys & Girls Club members can learn about the art of photography through the ImageMakers National Photography Contest and Program. Funded by the Circuit City Foundation, ImageMakers encompasses both a year-round photography program for Clubs and an annual contest.

The program gives young people the chance to express themselves creatively, learn skills that are fun, build confidence and be exposed to a new art form that could potentially lead to a career.

Through the annual ImageMakers contest, Club members compete for scholarships, cameras, even all-expense paid trips, courtesy of Circuit City. Competition categories include color process, black & white process, digital, photo-essay and a special portfolio scholarship category for youth ages 16-18.

For young people in photography programs, the camera provides a means of artistic expression and an avenue for a possible career. Through their photographs, youth can reflect on their own lives and share experiences with others. All across the country each year, ImageMakers helps develop skills, values and self-esteem in Club members, while inspiring their imaginations and creativity.



## Awakening Creativity in Kids

We all know how important reading, spelling and math are to young people's education, but what about the arts? When you think of the arts, you probably think of drawing, crafts, music – in other words, things kids generally enjoy more than math class.

In addition to being fun activities for youth, however, the arts also stimulate creativity and complex thinking. Study of the arts has, in fact, been linked not only to enriching young lives, but to improving their academic performance as well.

Unfortunately – and tragically – arts programming is disappearing from public schools at an alarming rate. Whenever there are budget cuts, arts are the first thing to go. For that reason, it is more important than ever to provide kids with a creative outlet through other venues.

As part of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's approach to healthy child development, The Arts has long been one of our core programming areas. Our Clubs offer programs that enable youth to develop their creativity and cultural awareness through knowledge and appreciation of the visual arts, crafts, performing arts and creative writing.

This issue of *The Positive Place* provides a sampling of arts programming offered in thousands of Boys & Girls Clubs across

the country. From photography to fine arts to digital media, Clubs give young people the opportunity to expand their minds and see the world in a different way. We believe this is one of the most important ways we can help children become productive, responsible and caring citizens, the heart of our mission.

To see more of the artwork featured in this edition, please visit [www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org), click on "Programs" and select "The Arts" and "Specialized Initiatives." Thank you again for supporting Boys & Girls Clubs of America and helping us provide our nation's youth with a truly well-rounded education.



## BGCA'S MISSION

To inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America comprises a national network of more than 3,300 neighborhood-based facilities, serving some 3.6 million young people annually.

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[www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org)


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**The Positive Place For Kids**



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## Snapshot of Success

One talented Club alumna, Connie Jackson, 19, has made the most of opportunities offered at her Club. Her talent and participation in the ImageMakers photography program (see "Picture Perfect") at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Scottsdale, Ariz., have provided her with experiences she might not otherwise have had.

Connie became involved in photography when she was a high school freshman. The process of taking and developing photos

provided a calm place her life. When Connie's days grew stressful, she sought out the sanctuary of the darkroom.

For Connie, being "black, female and young hasn't always been easy, but I am determined to overcome any obstacles that are put in my path." Her self-portrait, entitled "Ms. President," represents her struggles during a difficult time and shows a photographer/subject capable of overcoming challenges.

During Connie's junior year in high school, her Club's teen director recognized her potential as a photographer and encouraged her to enter the scholarship portfolio category of the ImageMakers contest. Connie's portfolio was selected as one of four national winners in the category for 2002 and again the following year. "It was a huge thrill to learn that I had won!" she says.

Connie, who is majoring in photographic imaging at The Art Institute of Atlanta, credits the ImageMakers program for her success.

"My father said, 'Find something that you love and make it your career,'" says Connie. "That's what I'm doing with photography."



*Ms. President*



"It's time we realize just how much our future depends on how well we integrate the magic and creativity of the arts into the lives of future generations. With the pervasive nature of violence, crime and drugs in our society today, we must pursue every avenue to diminish the destructive impact these social problems have on our young people. Participation in the arts can be that positive, engaging vehicle that sparks the imagination of our children, makes a difference in their lives and enriches their communities."

Bill Ivey  
Former Chairman  
National Endowment for the Arts

## The Finer Points

Before children learn to read and write, they color, draw and dance. From a very early age, the fine arts – dance, drama, music and visual arts – are an essential part of our experience.

Fine arts programs in Boys & Girls Clubs teach young people to explore various arts and crafts, and learn how to produce work in each medium. These programs also help youth gain a broad understanding of past and present cultures and civilizations through art history and art appreciation sessions.

The centerpiece of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's fine arts programming is the annual National Fine Arts Exhibit. Each year, some 900 Boys & Girls Clubs participate in this program, which enables Club members to develop their creativity and cultural awareness through visual arts. The exhibit has 10 categories: monochromatic drawing, multicolored drawing, pastel, watercolor, oil/acrylic, print making, mixed media, collage, sculpture and graphic arts.

The exhibit features competitions on the local, regional and national levels. Each winner of the national contest receives a \$100 award and a special prize from L'Oreal, which funds the exhibit.

## Brave New Arts World

The rapid expansion of technology over the last decade has touched every aspect of our lives, from how we communicate with each other to how we find information on just about any topic. The arts have not been immune to this technological revolution. For instance, whereas high quality films were once the sole domain of Hollywood, today almost anyone with the right equipment can produce a movie that might end up in theaters.

Unfortunately, millions of America's at-risk youth do not have access to the power of computers and the Internet. These young people – including many Boys & Girls Club members – are at a

disadvantage in the classroom and the job market, and are ill-equipped to take their place as productive members of society.

To address these issues, Boys & Girls Clubs of America created the Digital Arts Suite, which has two goals: enhance technological proficiency among youth and introduce them to the world of digital arts. The Digital Arts Suite, sponsored by Microsoft, teaches Club members the fundamentals of Web design and development; desktop publishing; digital photography and photo manipulation; digital movie making; and electronic music making.

Each year, Club members participate in National Digital Arts Festivals to showcase their technological and creative skills. The festivals, also sponsored by Microsoft and supported by software and equipment donations from Best Buy Children's Foundation, are based on an annual topic, such as "Heralding Heroes" and the 2004 theme, "Inspiring Acceptance through Digital Arts."

All programs within the Digital Arts Suite are fun, interactive and, most importantly, help youth develop the skills they will need to compete in a workforce that is quickly becoming dominated by technology.



## A Will to Help Others

Do you have a will? If not, did you know that a will is one of the most important documents you will ever sign? A will lets you direct precisely who will receive the property you accumulate during your lifetime. Obtaining a will is a simple process that will afford you peace of mind – knowing that your assets will be distributed exactly as you choose.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's new brochure, *Your Will to Help*, offers valuable information for use in planning your will. Please return the coupon for your free copy.

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"My father said, 'Find something that you love and make it your career.' That's what I'm doing with photography."

Connie Jackson

