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JACK BUNCHER FOUNDATION AWARDS ART EXPRESSION \$20,000 FOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING IN TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR 2018

Allegheny Valley and Jeannette City each to receive \$10,000 in programs

Pittsburgh, PA (February 27, 2018)—In a strong display of support for arts education in western Pennsylvania, the Jack Buncher Foundation has awarded Art Expression Inc. a programming grant of \$20,000. Art Expression is a (501)(c)(3) nonprofit provider of after-school programs that use components of art and music therapy to promote social and emotional learning for children and adolescents. In addition to its flagship *Creative pARTners* program, Art Expression Inc. has developed specialty programs that combine science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) concepts with art to create STEAM programming. This grant will fund all of Art Expression’s STEAM programs in two school districts—Allegheny Valley and Jeannette City—in the current calendar year.



A student from Jeannette McKee Elementary School working on a Shibori scarf, Fall 2017. Shibori is a Japanese art in which old clothes are re-dyed by wrapping them in ordinary objects like tree branches or chopsticks to create interesting patterns and colors.

Art Expression is a small but mighty organization that is a two-time finalist for the **National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award**, the nation’s highest honor for out-of-school-time youth programs. Art Expression was recently reclassified by the IRS as a public charity, setting the stage for increased public awareness and expanding the program’s reach to more students in disadvantaged areas in the region.

“The children in both of these underserved school districts face big challenges and are in need of programs such as ours,” says Art Expression president Angela Lowden. “Sometimes the schools aren’t able to allocate much money toward art supplies and programming. Worse, in many cases the students are dealing with serious problems at home. Art Expression gives them a safe space and an oasis of inclusion and non-judgement. Without this gift, these children wouldn’t be able to continue to participate in this enrichment program that means so much to them.”

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Jeannette City superintendent Matthew Jones said, “We’re delighted to welcome Art Expression back to our schools once again in 2018. The students of Jeannette deserve high-quality after-school programming, and this grant ensures that Art Expression will be here for them well into the next school year.”

Allegheny Valley superintendent Pat Graczyk said, “We couldn’t be happier about this news. Art Expression has always been a big hit with our students, faculty and parents. Its focus on academic enhancement and art instruction makes it an ideal extension of the school day that students are enthusiastic about attending. A waiting list is often needed to meet the demand.”

Art Expression Inc. is a non-profit foundation established in 2001 by James and Angela Lowden as an expression of their passion for alleviating the social inequalities that exist among children of different abilities and backgrounds. Art Expression’s programming fosters creativity and imagination and enhances self-esteem for children in schools, homeless shelters and community organizations. Art Expression is a two-time finalist (2017 and 2013) for the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, distinguishing the organization as one of the top 50 arts- and humanities-based programs in the country and for which it received certificates of excellence from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Art Expression has been designated as a “Model Art Therapy Program” by the American Association of School Administrators & American Art Therapy Association in 2011. Since its founding, Art Expression has served over 10,000 children in Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

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Students at Colfax Upper Elementary School (Allegheny Valley School District) painting their “box parade puppet” in the ARTS in Motion program, Spring 2017.

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