

PRESS RELEASE



Neighborhood Arts Brings Arts-Enrichment Program to East Palo Alto Charter School

Palo Alto, CA, October 6, 2011—East Palo Charter School (EPACS) will welcome a veritable army of volunteers from Neighborhood Arts, a new non-profit organization that brings the arts to after-school programs in underserved communities. In the fall and winter quarters, the 4th, 5th and 6th graders at EPACS will partake of five artistic disciplines: Visual Art, Music, Dance, Drama and Poetry. The goal is to engage young middle-schoolers in activities that will add meaning to their lives and give them new outlets for self-expression. Ultimately, they will take their new skills to other segments of the population—seniors and young schoolchildren—to entertain, engage, and influence in positive ways.

The kids at EPACS will start the fall quarter with a sampler 'survey' course team-taught by volunteer artists: each teacher will offer a two-week mini course to give the kids a taste for each of the five disciplines available through Neighborhood Arts.

At the end of the fall quarter, students get to choose up to two electives for the next ten-week quarter.

Veteran art teachers will team up with a local architect who specializes in 3-D art, to create a course that touches on all the elements of design, emphasizing group work and experimentation. Dance will involve a variety of teachers, and an even greater variety of Hip Hop moves. Poetry/Drama is about developing self-expression through the written, then spoken word. There will be a Rounds Choir, where children will participate in making harmony right from the start, and sharing their group work with others in the community along with our dancers and actors. With some donated instruments, Neighborhood Arts will offer after-school lessons with a view to future ensemble work.

"We are starting with an all-volunteer operation. By next year at this time, I hope to have attracted funding sources who want to help us 'take the show on the road' to other schools and programs in underserved areas, and expand our 'outreach' component," explains Joan Bigwood, Founder of Neighborhood Arts. "After school, before dark, is one of the most vulnerable times of the day for underserved kids. Rather than spend that unsupervised time aimlessly, Neighborhood Arts offers an engaging alternative. We want to reach kids early on, before they're teens so when they have the choice, they will choose the arts. We are modeling meaningful, passionate lives."

About Neighborhood Arts

Founded in memory of Guy and Jill Bigwood, patrons of the arts and social activists, Neighborhood Arts is an after-school arts enrichment program whose primary mission is to incorporate cutting-edge findings in sociology and education to help bridge diverse communities of young people through arts enrichment. For more information, visit www.neighborhood-arts.org.

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