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Interview with Josey Stamm, Artistic/Educational Director of NetworkArts



To better understand why the **Community Partnership** is at the Heart of **Service Learning** we continue our interviews with world class Community Partners.

Josey Stamm is the Education/Artistic Director of **NetworkArts**. This program creates magnificent student designed tile mosaics which are legitimate works of art and visual curriculum guides.

Guerilla Educators - What is NetworkArts, Josey.

Josey Stamm - NetworkArts designs educational programs which fuse science and the humanities with the art form of mosaic. The mosaics document the students' learning process,. It is our hope that the collective body of work created since

NetworkArts' founding in 1993 will serve as a region-wide public art mosaic classroom. What we have tried to do is to pioneer the use of the public art form of mosaic as both a learning device and public teaching tool

NetworkArts students explore an array of subjects in environmental science, astronomy, social and science history, heroes and legends, and jazz history. Through classroom work, field trips, and the design and construction of the culminating mosaics, the learning experience is participatory and active. Since its founding, NetworkArts has created over 130 major ceramic tile mosaic installations, with the participation of many tens of thousands of children throughout the region.

GE - What a great way to involve students in their educational process! The mosaics are also a positive legacy for these students to refer back to as they become adults. Speak to the mission of NetworkArts, Josey.

JS - NetworkArts educational programs are dedicated to expanding children's opportunities to express themselves; to explore science, art and the humanities; and to create art that permanently transforms their communities.

GE - Where can NetworkArts mosaics be found in the Philadelphia area?

JS - They can be found at the Philadelphia International Airport (Terminal B); The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia; the Academy of Natural Sciences; the Philadelphia Zoo; Camden's Campbell's Field (New Jersey); the Manayunk Canal; the Camden Children's Garden; the Kensington branch of The Philadelphia Free Library; Temple University (Ambler Campus); and Camden City (New Jersey) Council Chambers; in addition to numerous schools, recreation centers, parks, nursing homes, and community sites across the entire region in and around Philadelphia.

GE - That's quite an impressive roster of places. How many mosaics has NetworkArts completed, thus far?

JS - We have completed over 130 mosaics, working with about 30,000 students. Of these, over 50 deal with Ecological Education, which is our primary emphasis.

GE - Why is the Environment the major theme for NetworkArts?

JS - We believe that creating environmentally-conscious citizens is one of the great imperatives for this century. Some of our topics have included: *Model for a Green City; Conservation and Environmental Protection Strategies; The Ecological History of the Delaware Estuary; Nonpoint Source Pollution, How Forests Grow; Contemporary Ocean Issues; a 20,000 year Timeline of Man's Use of Earth Resources; The Status of Pennsylvania's Forests, Wetlands, Fields, and Streams; The First Year in the Life of a Mackerel, and Ocean Surface Currents and Their Effect on Land Climate*, among other topics.

GE - Tell us a little about the process, Josey. How do you go with students from concept to completion?

JS - NetworkArts uses the language of the arts to teach and communicate complex

ecological themes. Many students who have had difficulty with traditional textbook learning have been able to respond through the language of the arts. The mosaics which they create, and which reflect what they have learned, remain as teaching tools for the viewing public and future generations of students. Each contain "message tiles" with curricular text. We Explore our topics through discussion, research, translation of concepts into visual terms art-making, field trips, and mosaic building.

GE - Are there other topics besides Ecology that NetworkArts has worked with students?

JS - NetworkArts offers an astronomy program, examining major figures in the history of astronomy; life cycles of stars; galaxies and clusters; and the history of rocketry. In its pilot project, NetworkArts received the assistance of Homer Hickam, author of *Rocket Boys* and the subject of the film *October Sky*. Through him, NetworkArts students received letters from astronauts and NASA scientists, a 15 minute personal taped message from Mr. Hickam, and his attendance at the School District of Philadelphia's, Henry School mosaic dedication.

NetworkArts has done major projects in the area of Jazz History. NetworkArts was commissioned by the 2000 Mellon Jazz Festival to create a tribute to the Jazz legend, Sun Ra.

As part of a Philadelphia citywide celebration of the 75th anniversary of the birth of John Coltrane, NetworkArts worked with 100 students from four diverse neighborhoods to create four mosaics, each examining a different aspect of Coltrane's career - his major stylistic periods, artists who have been influenced by Coltrane, major landmark works showing his evolution, and non-jazz influences on his work.

In 2005, we created with students a major work celebrating Philadelphia's rich jazz heritage, paying tribute to over 90 artists with major connection to the city. It has been created by students at five Free Library of Philadelphia branches, and children from Project Home, a homeless organization in the city. During the preliminary phase of mosaic preparation, students received lecture/demonstrations and performances by Philadelphia jazz musicians.

In the Humanities, NetworkArts has explored the history of aviation in a major installation at Philadelphia International Airport, the History of the 20th Century with varying emphases in multiple sites; African American Scientists, and the History of Camden at the city's Rand Transportation Center, among other topics.

NetworkArts is involved in a series of intergenerational projects with seniors in neighborhood nursing homes and children from neighborhood schools. It has worked with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company and the Philadelphia Eagles. It has worked with students in social service programs in Camden to create six mosaics at Campbell's Field (Camden), home of that city's minor league baseball team, the Riversharks.

NetworkArts also has a sister organization, NetworkArts Northern Ireland, in Belfast, Northern Ireland.