

Digital Arts Festivals



Club Youth Merge Art and Technology to Unleash Creativity



"War" by Julian H., BGCs of Greater Kansas City (Mo.)

By John Collins

Nancy Williams, technology director for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Omaha, Neb., has witnessed firsthand the difference art can make in young lives.

Teenagers Donaven Smith and Jesse Berry were home-school students who became members of the Omaha Club to have access to technology. They worked with Club staff to refurbish the organization's computers. They also became involved in Digital Arts Festivals.

Digital Arts Festivals are made possible through generous contributions from founding partner, Microsoft, and the Best Buy Children's Foundation.

The festivals are the competition components of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's five Digital Arts Suite programs: Music Tech, Photo Tech, Movie Tech, Web Tech and Design Tech [see box]. These festivals enable Club members who use the programs to gain recognition at local and, potentially, regional and national levels. For Jesse and Donaven, Music Tech spoke to their love of music. They got involved. And they were good.

Success Breeds Success

The first year Jesse participated, his music entry earned him the top spot for his age group in the Midwest regional festival. The following year, Donaven not only won the Midwest again, but was also the national winner in his age group. Technology Director Williams remembers the impact it had on the young man.

"Donaven is kind of shy," she says. "Before this, he didn't want to talk to people. But winning the music

festival gave him confidence. He realized he could do things other people couldn't."

Confidence enough, in fact, for Donaven to perform his rap song about a day in the life at a Club before a live audience at BGCA's National Education and Technology Summit in Orlando, Fla.

Williams attributes the teens' newfound creative energy to the Digital Arts Festivals. "Before they became involved, their aspirations were to just finish earning their G.E.D.s [Graduate Equivalent Diploma]," she says. "But through the festivals, they now create not only music but movies, which they also were introduced to through Digital Arts Suite. They were even motivated to attend a local film festival to further develop their understanding of filmmaking. They write scripts, shoot movies and incorporate their music as a soundtrack." Screenings of the duo's productions at the Omaha Club have earned them standing ovations.

Today, Jesse attends community college on a scholarship. Donaven, now in his final year at the Club, plans to enter the Music Making Digital Arts Festival again. He hopes to emulate his friend and also earn a scholarship to the local community college. And in the spirit of giving back, Donaven and Jesse have helped refurbish more than 50 computers at the Club.

2006-07 Festivals

The current festival theme is "In the News." Participants are expected to create products that reflect the many ways people access and share information via the Web, TV, newspapers and magazines. Projects should reflect a member's ability to disseminate information through words, music, images or video.

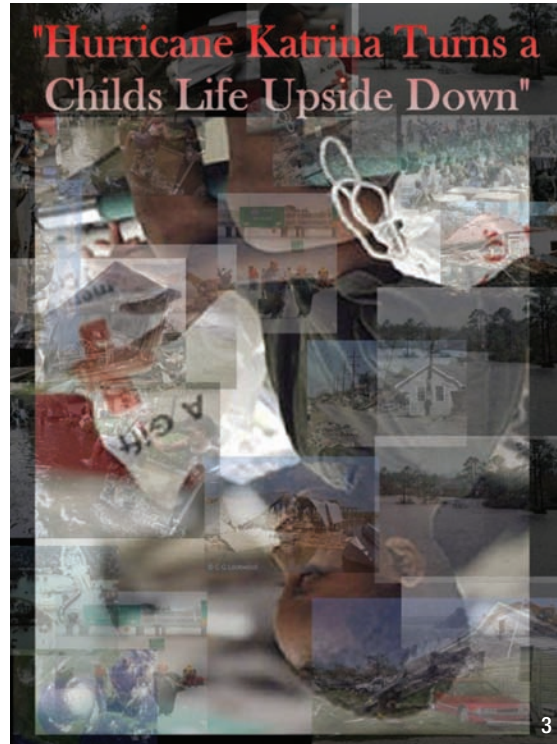
The images you see on these pages are the regional winning entries in the photo illustration festival. Contestants had to choose or shoot a photograph representing a current event, manipulate it with photo software, and write a caption to explain what is taking place in the photograph. Judging focused on the creativity and quality of the illustration, rather than the text. Considerations included how the software was used to overlap, change, crop and edit photos to create a new image.

For more information about the festivals, visit the Programs/Club Tech section of bgca.net or send an e-mail to digitalarts@bgca.org. ■

John Collins is a writer/editor for BGCA.

“Winning the music festival gave him confidence. He realized he could do things other people couldn’t.”

– Nancy Williams, technology director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Omaha



1) "America Will Never Be the Same," by Andrew P., Fort Monroe (Va.) Youth Services; 2) "Groundbreaking Gatlinburg" by Cheyenne P., BGC of the Smoky Mountains (Tenn.); 3) "Hurricane Katrina Turns a Child's Life Upside Down" by Alex G., BGCs of Tucson (Ariz.)

About Digital Arts Festivals

Each year, BGCA conducts Digital Arts Festivals to promote Boys & Girls Club members' creativity on local, regional and national levels. Some 1,800 entries were submitted for the 2006-07 festivals. National winners' artwork shows a high level of skill and originality. The festivals are the culmination of all participants have learned from the Digital Arts Suite programs, which are described below.

- **Web Tech:** Club members learn the basics of Web site design, integrating graphics, text and sound into online sites.
- **Design Tech:** Learning graphic design concepts to create professional-quality print materials and animation.
- **Photo Tech:** Exploring the composition of digital photos and the effects of distance and angles.
- **Music Tech:** Studying digital music software applications and basic music theory. Club members learn to mix musical loops, and create original compositions and recordings.
- **Movie Tech:** Learning how to write screenplays, film scenes and edit raw footage.

Thanks to founding sponsor, Microsoft, and the Best Buy Children's Foundation for making this program possible.