

Arts in Mind

A series from Kiddo that explores arts and arts education

Mill Valley Student Theresa Iker Receives Award of Merit from the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival

By Angela Barnett

Around the corner is another beautiful Fall season in Mill Valley, when we can again look forward to the annual Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival. This year marks the 50th anniversary of this wonderful Mill Valley tradition that showcases local artists. In honor of this milestone, the MVFAF held an art contest, open to all in the community, for the 50th anniversary commemorative poster. For the first time, a student, Theresa Michelle Iker, was given an Award of Merit for her entry into the contest.

“Her piece reflected the festival, the 50th anniversary, and Mill Valley,” said Sarah Suloff, the MVFAF Poster Committee Chair. “Her work was original and it was exciting to see that she took the competition to heart. We wanted to honor Theresa as her work represented the artistic promise that we want to encourage in young artists.”

The MVFAF is a supporter of arts in the community and arts in education. They donate to the art program at Mill Valley Middle School.

Theresa had just completed the 8th grade at Mill Valley Middle School where she studied with Kiddo art teacher Julie Leonard. “She taught me an artist doesn’t have to naturally [or instantly] be good at everything. She helped me to develop a style and to take criticism,” said Theresa. Through Julie, Theresa also studied Georgia O’Keefe, Frieda Kahlo, and a few impressionists, who she also cites as her inspirations. “I like how they can convey symbolism through the image which can mean many different things to different people. They used their art to open up windows, which was fascinating to me.” These influences obviously helped Theresa create the award-winning poster.

When the award notice arrived, she was quite stunned. “I didn’t believe it [at first]. I had to get my dad to read the letter to make sure that my eyes weren’t playing tricks on me. Art is something everyone interprets differently, so it was a big deal to be chosen.” Theresa added, “It was great to be acknowledged by professionals.” Theresa also got to enjoy a \$50 gift certificate from Mill Valley Art and Paper.

Theresa and her older sister, who is currently interested in architecture, have enjoyed an interest in art from a very young age. She recalled how much she wanted to create the same preschool art projects she saw her older sister bring home. She realizes now how much she loves art and how it is very much a part of her life.

Although she is soon to start her freshman year at Tam High, she already knows that she wants to end up in AP Art History and that, no matter what her profession, she will always have an easel in her living room. “My mother is a doctor and she found out that art history was the best class she took,” explained Theresa.

In addition to donating to the Middle School art program, the MVFAF has also provided art supplies and avenues for raising funds to various local schools. Supporting arts in education is an important part of the MVFAF organization. Sarah Suloff hopes to open the poster competition to young artists again in 2007.

“The MVFAF offers kids a path for exposure,” she said. We encourage young artists to start their work in art as soon as they can.”

Angela Barnett, a parent in the Mill Valley School District, serves on Kiddo!’s Communications Committee.