

# Providing an opportunity for art

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Staff Writer

Launched in 1993 by a group from St. John's Episcopal Cathedral, Cathedral Arts Project (CAP) started because they wanted to offer children in a nearby neighborhood an opportunity to appreciate art.

It was a class for 10 children back then. Now, it's a little bigger at over 1,200 children. And that's not the only good news.

"For the third year in a row, our results have convinced us that participation in the arts is a catalyst for extraordinary change in our city's youth," said Kimberly Hyatt, executive director of CAP.

For the 2007-08 school year, eight out of every 10 students involved with the program showed improvements in areas such as grades and the ability to express anger and conflict appropriately. Each of the participating children is in low income areas in Duval County.

Free of cost, the classes range from visual arts to playing instruments and a vast array of other artistic endeavors. There is only one rule for the children in order to participate, students must maintain a "C" average in school.

According to Director of Community Relations Melanie Messer, CAP also has partnerships that will allow more after school programs for children



Shana David and the 2007-08 Central Riverside music class are part of the Cathedral Arts Project.



David uses a frog puppet to teach students about music.



Students at Central Riverside's 2007-08 music class learning to play the recorder.

like Jacksonville Children's Zone (JCZ) which is part of the Jacksonville Journey.

Cathedral Arts will participate in JCZ by providing three after school programs in dance, music and visual arts for students of the Smart Pope Livingston Elementary School. There will also be two free programs at Eugene Butler Middle School.

The organization may offer children the opportunity to learn about the arts, but it also helps support the local art scene, according to Messer.

"CAP benefits local artists by employing 30 professional teaching artists who live and work in Northeast Florida," said Messer.

CAP also helps the students go on to productive lives, sometimes even helping them succeed in a career in art.

"Thirteen of CAP's students have joined the Florida Ballet in Jacksonville," said Messer. "It's common for our graduating students to audition for and be accepted into Jacksonville's La Villa School of the Arts."

CAP also helps the Duval County School System by improving the grades of the students, progress that is demonstrated by 80 percent of students involved with the program showing improvement.

The organization also helps fund art education in Jacksonville that coincides with Florida's Sunshine State Standards for Education.

The organization's annual "Angels of the Arts" reception is coming up, and like last year Jaguars owners Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver will be the honorary chairs. Each year, the reception is held at a private residence with this year's location in Ortega Oct. 23. The invited guests are major donors of CAP who gave at least \$1,000 to the organization.

For Messer, it's about more than just the future. It's about creating a lifelong passion for art in Jacksonville's children.

"For many of CAP's kids, when they create a work of art, or complete a musical or dance performance, it's the first time in their lives that they have been recognized for achieving something positive and beautiful," said Messer. "Seeing their work on exhibit or hearing the audience's applause often teaches our students that they are successful, valuable individuals."

For more information on CAP visit their Web site at [www.cap-kids.org](http://www.cap-kids.org).

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