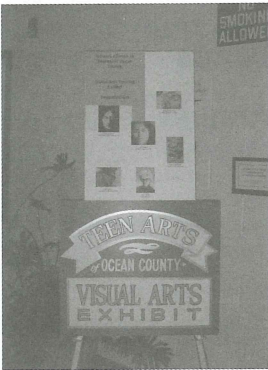


Ocean County Teen Arts Festival Hails All Manner of Achievement

by Victoria Ford



The 2006 Teen Arts Festival Gallery Reception at Ocean County College

On Tuesday, April 3 and Wednesday April 4, all of Ocean County College's main campus will hum with the youthful energy of an anticipated 1,500 talented teenagers

from 14 high schools throughout the county as the 30th annual Ocean County Teen Arts Festival gets underway.

The multifaceted festival is part of a statewide effort to recognize excellence in artistic achievements among high school students of all skill levels and in all creative, visual, performance and fine art forms. The state began its annual tradition in 1969 as a way to encourage teenagers to explore and expand their artistic visions and accomplishments together in a supportive environment, according to the Friends of the Teen Arts organization, headquartered in Lambertville. Ocean County joined the effort 10 years later. Today, all 21 of New Jersey's counties participate, holding their respective festivals each spring between March and May. The state festival is the grand finale that takes place at the College of New Jersey campus at the end of May.

Roberta Krantz, Ocean County College's Fine Arts Center director, has undertaken the responsibility of coordinating the Ocean County event as a

volunteer for the past 25 years or more.

There was a time the festival was a one-day event, she said, with 13 high schools participating. Then, two years ago the festival was stretched into two days to accommodate the addition of several more high schools to the roster. Scheduling the event can prove tricky because it must fall on two consecutive days when the college is closed and the high schools are in session, Krantz explained. Other than that, she said, the task is not difficult so much as it is time-consuming. This year, 14 schools are participating – seven each day.

During the planning process, the numerous performances, workshops and visual art exhibits are spread throughout the whole campus, utilizing all available space, she said. Performances in the theatre include instrumental and choral groups large and small, drama and dance. Elsewhere, in the classrooms and lecture halls, film presentations, photography exhibits, literary works, or two- and three-dimensional pursuits might be showcased. Interspersed throughout the schedule are workshops, facilitated by professional artists and musicians (members either of the college faculty or of the community at large), lending to the festival an added educational component.

"We try to make it as much fun as possible," Krantz said. "It's chaotic but exciting.... Things are happening constantly – there's never a dull moment."

For her part, the best part is the satisfaction she reaps from "seeing everyone having a wonderful time." She added, she loves how much joy the young people get from being part of

something so successful.

The following seven high schools will attend the festival on Day One: Jackson, the Performing Arts Academy, Point Pleasant Beach, Southern Regional, Central Regional, Manchester and Brick. On Day Two: Brick Memorial, Lacey, Point Pleasant Boro, Toms River North, South and East and Monsignor Donovan.

One of the greatest aspects of the festival, in her opinion, is that "there are no winners and no losers; every participant is acknowledged" by way of a professional critique, and in that way the sheer enrichment of the experience is its own reward. The workshop leaders and other professionals are enlisted to offer their expert assessments of the student work they see. Funds for their services are provided by the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission, co-sponsor of the event.

Krantz gives the critiquers a lot of credit for being able to look objectively at the talents they observe.

Personally, she said, "I just look at them and I kvell," calling upon the Yiddish word meaning to beam with pride.

"No matter how much work is involved," she said, "the satisfaction is guaranteed."