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Visual arts programming for children earns Beach Museum a notable honor

MANHATTAN — Programming offered by the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art at Kansas State University to get children involved in the visual arts is receiving a prestigious honor.

The Beach Museum's Young Curators and Artists programs have been awarded the 2014 Excellence in Programming Award from the Mountain-Plains Museum Association Education Committee. The award will be presented at a ceremony Oct. 1 at the association's annual meeting in Snowmass near Aspen, Colorado.

Created by Kathrine Schlageck, senior educator at the Beach Museum, Young Curators and Artists are a series of programs that get children, from 6-year-olds to seniors in high school, involved in visual art experiences, including exploring careers in museum work.

"The programs were piloted in summer 2011 with funding from a Youth in the Community Grant from the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation as a way to get more children in the area involved in the arts," Schlageck said.

"Kathrine and her staff are very dedicated to giving young people creative opportunities," said Linda Duke, director.

In the Young Curators program, kids ages 11-17 work one afternoon a week as a team to create an exhibition using works on display in the museum's permanent collection galleries.

"After meeting with all members of the museum staff to learn about museum careers, the Young Curators work as a group to choose a theme, title and corresponding artworks; write opening text, labels and press materials for the exhibition; create a self-guided tour; and develop educational/art activities for an open house event," Schlageck said. "Artworks are chosen from the permanent collection and are given special labels created by the Young Curators. The exhibition is on display for the following year. Students also learn about applying for a curator job as they fill out an application, get a teacher recommendation, interview and sign a contract."

The Young Artists and Young Observers half-day workshops consist of tours, activities and art workshops for children ages 6-12. Schlageck is assisted at the workshops by high school and college students recruited through Manhattan High School and the art faculty at Kansas State University

"Young Artists tour the Young Curators exhibition and Young Observers tour the Hummel Family Meadow and receive a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum," Schlageck said. "They create their own artwork based on

their favorite piece in the Young Curators' exhibition or from outdoor sketches. They also prepare an artist's statement for their work."

When preparing their works for viewing at their exhibition/open house, the Young Artists and Young Curators work with their choice of professional art materials, such as acrylic, cray pas, pastel and prisma colors, and the works are matted. The exhibition/open house is offered on a weekend and works are displayed in the museum's UMB Theatre.

Each year the program changes to incorporate special exhibitions, Schlageck said. New programs in summer 2014 included Young Musicians and Young Writers.

Young Musicians was offered in four-day workshops for ages 6-9 and 9-12. Using inspiration from the museum's permanent collection, the Young Musicians created musical compositions that included instrumentals, vocals, sound work and song writing. Assisting were a Kansas State University music education student and museum education staff.

Young Writers is a weeklong, full-day program for middle and high school students. It's run by students and staff of the university's English department and focuses on writing about art. Participants got the opportunity to interact with Calder Kamin, the Beach Museum's first artist-in-residence participant.

Performances by the Young Musicians and Young Writers were included in this year's Young Artists and Young Curators exhibition/open house event.

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