

## Teens Curate Exhibition of Student Work at Toledo Museum of Art



The free exhibition, titled *The Spirit of Creativity*, was curated by the Museum's 22-member High School Art Council.

**TOLEDO, OH.-** More than 380 art works by students from 14 area high schools are on exhibition through July 19 at the [Toledo Museum of Art](#) thanks to a group of fellow teenagers. The free exhibition, titled The Spirit of Creativity, was curated by the Museum's 22-member High School Art Council.

The Council, now in its second year of existence, brings together high school juniors and seniors who are either artists or have an interest in the arts. Steve Nowak, the Museum's director of education and community outreach, plans hands-on art activities and teaches the students about various aspects of Museum operations.

Students are selected to participate based on applications distributed through local art teachers and the Museum's web site. The council meets twice a month, with one meeting being an art experience and one, a business meeting.

"It's a way for students who have an interest in art to learn more about it," says Nowak.

This year the Council's major project was to organize an exhibition showcasing the artistic talent of their respective high schools.

The high schools include: Anthony Wayne, Maumee Valley Country Day School, St. Ursula Academy, Otsego, Maumee, Perrysburg, St. John's Jesuit, Toledo School for the Arts, Sylvania Southview, Springfield, Bowsher, Ottawa Hills, Bedford (Mich.), and Van Buren.

"The exhibition shows the strengths of art at the high school level; there are some really talented artists out there," said Nowak, who praised the students for their hard work in organizing the exhibition.

"These juniors and seniors were required to step out of their comfort zones to talk with their fellow students, and do what was needed to be done logistically and administratively. They collected the artwork, got it to the Museum, picked the pieces to be displayed, and wrote the descriptions. They had to go out and get support at their high schools for the project, and they received it from their art teachers and school administrators," Nowak added.

For Courtney Sweinhagen, a founding member of the Council who just graduated from Otsego High School, the project meant personally overcoming some shyness.

"I used to be shy, but I had to meet new kids to talk to them about the project," Sweinhagen said, adding that she also had to work with a new art teacher, to whom she dedicated her portion of the exhibition for being so inspirational.

Sweinhagen also said working on the exhibit has increased her interest in the Museum, and that she has much admiration for the hard work of Museum's staff members, such as Nowak "who does such a terrific job."

"There is so much more that goes on behind the scenes to get everything ready at the Museum; it's amazing," said the teen, who will be a freshman at Bowling Green State University next fall.

As Council members, the students not only learn about the Museum, but they also form friendships. Of the six juniors who participated last year, all decided to stay on the Council their senior year. Nowak anticipates a similar number of juniors this year will want to continue to participate during their senior year in high school.

The Council's Spirit of Creativity exhibition continues through July 19 in the Community Gallery. Admission to the Museum and exhibition are free.

The Council's last activity for the year will be an "overnight" at the Museum in mid July, when the teenagers will have the chance to take "flashlight tours" of the galleries, see what the Museum keeps in its basement and watch movies.

In addition to Sweinhagen, Council members include: Alexa Dennis of Anthony Wayne High School; Caroline Keller of Bowsher High School; Abby Byers and Scott Small of Maumee Valley Country Day School; Gil Byers of St. John's Jesuit High School; Delaney Cavanaugh and LesLee Winfield of Sylvania Southview High School; Emily Dangler and Marnie Hull of Ottawa Hills High School; Yeahwa Hong of Springfield High School; Rachel Kalinoski and Abigail Lambert of St. Ursula Academy; Carolyn Kauth, Reem Soliman and Caroline Walp of Perrysburg High School; Jacob Parr and Emily VanWormer of the Toledo School for the Arts; Nick Petrillo and Kelsey Shipp of Maumee High School; Nicole Turner of Bedford (Mich.) High School, and Hannah Wilkinson of Van Buren High School.