



Local artists excel in national exhibition

by Deborah Rose in Community · 11 days ago ·

Works by student-artists from NMHS, VCA recognized in California exhibition →

Published 4/25/22 at www.newmilfordnow.org

Local artists excel in national exhibition

Works by student-artists from NMHS, VCA recognized in California exhibition

By Deborah Rose

Nine individuals recently represented New Milford at a national arts event.

Seven students from the Village Center for the Arts and two Ceramic II students from New Milford High School were recognized in the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts' 56th annual conference.

The students had selected pieces juried in the March 16-19 exhibition held during the event in Sacramento, Calif. The event was offered in-person and remotely.

"This is a huge honor," said Sharon Kaufman, VCA pottery studio director. "This makes (the artists) nationally recognized" at a young age.

Each year, potters, clay artists, sculptors, students and ceramic enthusiasts from all over the world attend the conference that includes workshops, lectures, gallery exhibitions and crawls, vendors and demonstrations all related to working in clay.

Since 2018, the VCA has submitted piece for the exhibition, which is open to any school or organization that works with children in grades K-12. And each year, their artists have been recognized.

This year, NMHS art teacher Annette Marcus submitted 10 student pieces; two were accepted to be exhibited.

"I am delighted to have had the opportunity to work with these talented young people and assist them with improving their skills in this medium and encouraging their burgeoning artistic talent," Marcus said of the two students whose work was accepted this year.

"Their creativity inspires their peers, impresses their teachers and helps me daily revisit my love for working in clay," she said.

NMHS winners are junior Nicole Reiske for "Selfie Tile" (Orton Foundation Award) and sophomore Beatriz Novas for "Wax Resist Plate" (Artistic Merit Award).

Both students were enrolled in Ceramics II this year, and both will receive cash awards. Their work will also appear on the NCECA 25th anniversary poster and in the NCECA K12 catalogue.

The pieces are made from earthenware clay.

Following are the VCA winners, in alphabetical order:

Anessa Cardoni, 13, of Lafayette, Calif., for "Lady Dimitescu" (SiO₂ Clay Award, with a prize of 55 pounds of clay); Alexandra Hill, 10, of New Milford for "Couch Potato;" Maya Lohkin, 8, of New York City for "The Purrrrrfect Tea Party" (Artaxis Award of Excellence, with a prize of SiO₂ Clay Award of 27 pounds of clay); David Lowe, 14, of Washington for "Hidden Plymouth" (Jack Troy Merit Cash Award and Award of Artistic Merit); Alina Mahon, 10, of New Milford for "Africa Says 'Hi'" (Orton Foundation Cash Award); Stella McCully, 7, of Jupiter, Fla., for "Summer Flies By" (Jack Troy Merit Cash Award and Award of Artistic Merit); and Jehsinia Weiss, 10, Of Litchfield of "The Joy of Marbles."

"When she was chosen (to participate), I was so proud," said Amanda Hill, whose daughter, Alexandra, made "Couch Potato," a ceramic piece that depicts a scene with their family dog.

Every detail of the piece is spot on, Hill said, citing the dog, rug, couch and chair and stuffed animal with stuffing coming out of it.

Alexandra attended half-day programs at the VCA when she was younger, but it wasn't until last summer she took full-day classes using clay during a week-long summer camp.

When the family first heard the piece she created in camp was accepted into the exhibition, they were "shocked" in a good way.

"At the time, I didn't realize what an honor it was, but I didn't know the depth of it," Hill said, adding the national competition drew 1,000 submissions of which only 140 were accepted and seven were from the VCA.

Hill said she recognizes that, as a mother, she will foster her daughter's new-found talent that will be a lifelong skill.

The ceramic class "sparked the artist in her," related Hill, who said she is going to foster her daughter's love for this art.

Liberty Mahon of New Milford said she and her husband were "incredibly proud" of their daughter, Alina, 10, being selected to show her "Africa Says 'Hi'" zebra teapot.

"It feels really cool" to have chosen to participate, said Alina, who submitted a piece last year but was not selected.

"And when I saw it come to life at the show, I thought, 'This is real,'" she added.

This year, Kaufman was able to travel to the event with some of the artists and their families, including the Mahons.

To offset some of the cost for artists to travel to the event, VCA held a Plates for Planes fundraiser last year.

Kids threw plates throughout a day and the event was broadcast via live feed on social media. More than \$1,000 was raised.

Kaufman said some leftover plates will help to fund next year's trip to the exhibition planned in Ohio.

Four families – two of which had works in the exhibition and two that did not but had work showcased in prior years – accompanied Kaufman.

"It was wonderful to have other families there because they got to experience the competition in person," said Kaufman. "They got to the competition in their age group and see the kind of work being produced around the country."

Alina described mingling with others, including teachers, and being asked questions about her work. She also said it was “cool” to hear people talk about her work.

Mahon said she was most impressed with Kaufman at the event.

“As a parent, I always know Sharon is amazing and gives all to her students,” she said. “She cares so deeply, but to see her in action (in California) was really something.”

Kaufman was a “dedicated advocate” for her students, ensuring their works were properly displayed and followed up with event staff regarding a computer glitch

She even walked to a nearby Target to get lights that were needed for one of the ceramic pieces.

Alina said her attendance at the event inspired her creativity.

“After going, I really just wanted to get back in the studio. I have plans for more projects,” she said.

Kaufman was delighted to see the enthusiasm pour out from her students.

“The kids left (the exhibition) extremely motivated,” she said.” They had ideas pouring out of their heads.”

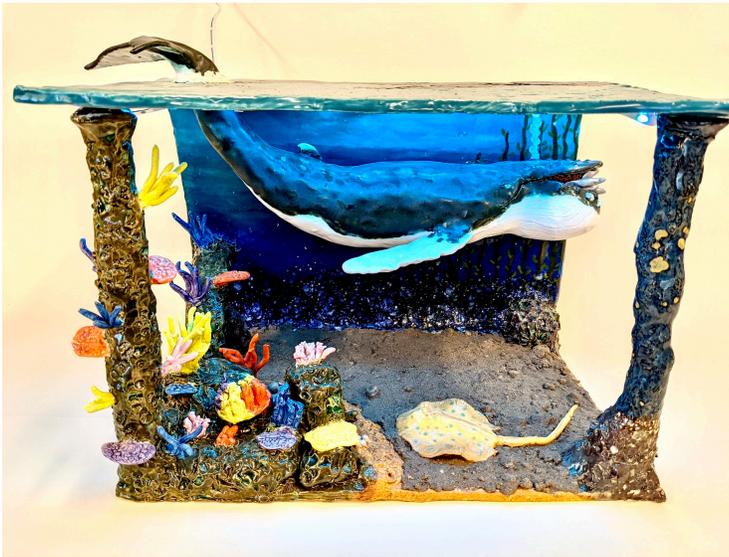


Courtesy of Village Center for the Arts/"Couch Potato," left, by Alexandra Hill, 10, of New Milford, right, was included in the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts' 56th annual conference held in California in March.

-more -



Courtesy of Village Center for the Arts/"Africa Says 'Hi,'" left, by Alina Mahon, 10, of New Milford, right, was included in the exhibition.



Courtesy of Village Center for the Arts/ David Lowe, 14, of Washington, right, was honored for his "Hidden Plymouth," left.



Courtesy of Village Center for the Arts / Jehsinia Weiss, 10, of Litchfield, right, was honored to exhibit her ceramic piece, "The Joy of Marbles," left.

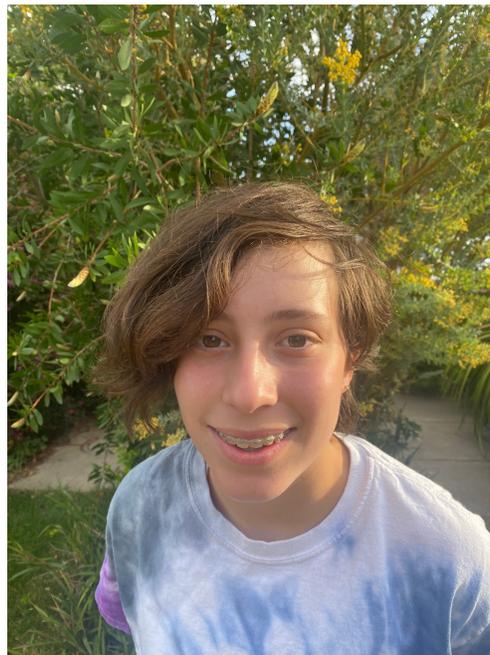


Village Center for the Arts / Maya Lohkin, 8, of New York City, right, won the Artaxis Award of Excellence, with a prize of SiO2 Clay Award of 27 pounds of clay for her "The Purrrrfect Tea Party."

- More -



Courtesy of Village Center for the Arts / "Summer Flies By," left, by Stella McCully, 7, of Jupiter, Fla., right, was included in the March exhibition.



Courtesy of Village Center for the Arts/ Anessa Cardoni, 13, of Lafayette, Calif., right, was honored for "Lady Dimitescu," left.

- More -



Courtesy of NMHS / New Milford High School junior Nicole Reiske was presented the Orton Foundation Award for "Selfie Tile."



Courtesy of NMHS / NMHS sophomore Beatriz Novas received the Artistic Merit Award for her "Wax Resist Plate."



Deborah Rose

Deborah Rose is a lifelong New Milford resident with more than 25 years in community journalism as a writer and photographer. Most recently, she served as editor of a local publication. She was appointed as New Milford Poet Laureate in April of 2022. For more columns, stories and photographs about New Milford, visit www.newmilfordnow.org and select "Stories."