

CASEY KIDS: THE CALENDAR CONNECTION

This year, children from the Bridgeport, Baltimore and Maine divisions participated in several art workshops, in part, to help produce Casey Family Services' 2004 calendar, which carries the theme of "Connections." Jim Dwyer, who designed the calendar, guided groups of children into developing colorful, creative artwork that has been incorporated into the calendar.

Children's artwork from other Casey divisions also was included. The Casey Calendar is now in its 10th year of production and continues to be a favorite among families and professionals alike. Dwyer led three six-hour art workshops for the children in each division. In addition to children enrolled in Casey programs, participants included children from the community.

"The art lessons I thought would be most beneficial concerned observation skills: looking at something and seeing its essence, its special being. 'Now, draw what you see, not what you think is there.' I believe that this essential awareness training is basic to all art and also to all sensitive appreciation of this bio-diverse planet. The kids looked, drew, and looked again," explains Dwyer.

The children produced art depicting different seasons, different plants and animals, and different landscapes, as well as different views of the world in various sizes, shapes and colors. "These drawings represent their broader definition of 'connections,'" says Dwyer. "In following lessons I wanted to move from observation to imagination. We experimented with brainstorming ideas and details. As they moved beyond the obvious, I saw their confidence grow and their imaginations engage. We discussed being different and thought about the essence of things. I brought in illustration manuals that showed samples of hundreds of professional illustrators.

"During the workshops, we talked about being aware of things that were similar and of things that were unique and decided that our unique views are what make us special." The result? Wonderful, thought-provoking art pieces that make viewers think of "connections" in a different light.

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