



Paul Figueroa, President
Taos Fall Arts Grant / Kids Give Back

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Final Report

With COVID as the driver by necessity for creativity in our educational outreach, and with input from partner schools, the Harwood Museum modified its art education program. We began conversations with artists in our *Contemporary Art Taos* exhibition to identify an artist/teacher who was up for the challenge. Izumi Yokoyama was selected as the artist who could successfully implement a virtual educational program that would engage students and benefit the schools. The delightful resulting project was called *Senbazuru of Hope and Healing* based on the Japanese tradition of folding 1000 paper cranes.

We were able to reach out to students who were distance learning from as close as 200 yards away and as far away as 25 miles. During last year's COVID school closures, many youth were not able to receive the instruction or guidance needed for an optimal learning experience. In an attempt to overcome this, Izumi made every effort to give the students a variety of learning platforms within this project. We pre-recorded two instructional videos made available via Harwood's YouTube channel to give students an understanding of the context and history of the Senbazuru project and to show students the art of folding Japanese paper cranes. Izumi used these videos as supplemental material for two Zoom sessions conducted with each class of students, giving a personal tutorial on the history of the project and information on what to expect in the first session. In the second session, she walked each class through folding the paper cranes. Each student received a materials packet with origami paper and a print-out of the instructions to use as a guide.

Izumi worked with 5 area schools (Anansi, Taos Charter, Roots & Wings, Enos Garcia and TISA), grades 3rd through 8th, and engaged over 500 students from 23 classes to teach the art of Japanese paper crane folding. These cranes, each including a post-COVID wish written by the students, were gathered, and installed outside under the Harwood Education Studio portal on Mother's Day for the community to enjoy. (See images included here). The installation remained at the Harwood through the end of June and then was reinstalled at the Taos Community Auditorium for the summer with a final installation as part of the Taos Fall Arts Festival in September.

In our assessment, we created a Google Survey, asking each participating student to rate their experience with the project. Questions included: What did they enjoy most about the project? Did you understand the project and why you were participating? What do you hope for after experiencing this past pandemic year? What did you learn from this project? We also asked if they had any questions for us.

Responses varied: In reference to using new skills with simple materials, participating students responded, "I liked that I did something that I have never done before," and "I figured out that I like to do the cranes because they look nice, and it is a good way for me to fidget." "I hope for everything going back to how it

was, "I miss everything" and "...that some art like this one can really help you through things that are hard" were comments made by students when discussions came up related to self-reflection and hope.

Teacher comments include: "Thank you for including us in this project. The kids loved learning about this beautiful tradition and folding origami. If you do this again or any other project we would love to participate." (Cassandra Bates, TISA). "The project was fantastic, and it was a wonderful experience for the students to participate and to have you [Izumi] as a special guest-artist facilitating the classes. The colorful entrance full of paper cranes is beautiful. I look forward to more opportunities for collaboration in the future". (Leslie Warnick, Anansi Charter).

This project helped students to connect with each other, to recognize that other cultures and time periods also had to overcome challenges, and to look forward to a better future.

The Harwood serves rural students who are 74% Hispanic and 13% Native American. In Taos County, 24.5% of the population lives below poverty level. This increases to 40.5% for children, 24% for Hispanic and 28% for Native Americans (City-Data & US Census 2016.) The Harwood reaches a core of children defined as "at-risk" youth.

Another measure of success is the feedback we've received regarding the community interest in coming to see the installation, photographing it, and appreciating how it brought our community together. In addition, the extended "life" of the installation through the Taos Fall Arts Festival contributes to feelings of pride within our students as they see their work being shown in a large annual art festival.

The successful execution of this project in the academic 2020-2021 year demonstrated that the Harwood is both "nimble" and creative. This ability to be so as an organization will help us as we address the still-to-be-revealed challenges as they unfold in the 2021-2022 academic year.

In conclusion, the Harwood Museum is grateful for support from Taos Fall Arts / Kids Give Back which allowed us to provide quality art education to our local youth during this difficult time. Among the additional benefits to the museum and the community, we were able to use this grant as leverage for matching funds from New Mexico Arts. Overall, this allowed us to work with numerous local schools as well as employ a local artist to provide a unique and educational experience. The resulting on-line educational component brought our schools, students, and community together with a moment of hope and inspiration.

Thank you!



