Achievement in the Arts Awards

Arts awards spotlight talented teens

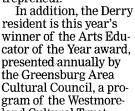
A Derry Area High School teacher is named the Arts Educator of the Year.

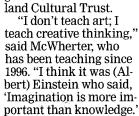
> BY CHRISTINE KINDL TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Richard McWherter considers himself a working artist "who happens to have an art teacher's job," helping students to approach learn-

ing in creative ways.

The visual arts instructor at Derry Area High School, McWherter is a professional photographer, a former commercial artist and an entrepreneur.





believe that's true.' McWherter will be recognized at a banquet to be held 6 p.m. May 20 at Seton Hill University,

in Greensburg. The event also will honor 56 high school

seniors for their outstanding efforts in visual arts, music and theater. Each of these talented teens, from 19 Westmoreland County high schools, will receive the Judges McCormick and Pezze Award of Artistic Merit.

The banquet, now in its ninth year, aims not only to recognize artistic endeavors but also to highlight the importance of arts education.

Westmoreland County judges Richard

E. McCormick Jr. and Debra Pezze will present the student awards. Event sponsors are county commissioners Tom Balya and Tom Ceraso, First Commonwealth Bank, First National Bank of Pennsylvania, Irwin Bank and Reginella Construction Co.

Creativity is not unique to art classes, McWherter said. "Before (children) can read, or do math ... they have to know that squiggles on paper are ideas," he wrote in his award application. "Art makes all learning possible.'

That philosophy impressed the group charged with choosing the award winner, said Iva Saraceni, a retired Seton Hill theater professor who heads the Cultural Trust's Arts and Education Committee.

She also applauded McWherter's career path, which took him out of the fast-paced world of commercial art and into his hometown high school.

"He practices what he teaches, and teaches what he practices," Saraceni said. "He's not only bringing real-world artistic skills and knowledge to the classroom, but he's come to this new career as a vocation.

At Derry Area, McWherter teaches crafts and ceramic classes, jewelry-making and sculpture. He also offers courses in 3-D animation and "fantasy painting," which blends traditional graphic arts with digital imagery.

In the Digital Art Studio Lab, students use emerging technologies to produce classroom presentations and digital portfolios on compact discs or DVDs.

Some of the work promotes the school's art department with posters, brochures, a newsletter and a Web site.

"Since we are an elective at the high school, we treat our students as clients and we compete ... for repeat customers," McWherter said.

He and his wife, Kimberly, a math teacher at Derry Area, have two sons who graduated from the high school.

McWherter's fine-art photographs what he calls his "gallery work" online at www.walkwood.net. Student works are highlighted on the school art department's Web site, listed under McWherter's name at derryasd.schoolwires.com.

---- visual arts -

Sara Rekrut



Parents: Kim and George Rekrut Future: Art major Activities: Costume design for high school play and musical; Art Club; Derry amphitheater design; New Growth

Arts Festival volunteer; internship with local artist.

Derry Area

music

Denise Frisko



Parents: Evelyn and Paul Frisko Future: Music education major, Seton Hill University Activities: Choir; vocal ensemble; marching band,

trumpet section leader; jazz band; wind ensemble; high school musical; county chorus and band; district chorus and honors choir; district jazz band; IUP and Fay-West honors bands.

Derry Area

theater -

Jake Emmerling



Parents: Ann and **Ernest Emmerling** Future: Musical theater major **Activities**: Student Council; choir, leadership team; World Language Honor Society:

SADD; all-class play; high school musical; honors choir; vocal ensemble; all-state chorus.

Derry Area



Pezze

McWherter

McCormick