



NEWS

Contact: Kim Silarski
313-624-0206
ksilarski@accesscommunity.org

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Student Photographers Show Inspiring Images Free Instructional Program Continues This School Year

Dearborn, MI (August 17, 2007) – Over the last 12 months, middle school students of diverse backgrounds from Dearborn and southwest Detroit learned digital photography skills as part of the Arab American National Museum’s SURA Arts Academy, a program funded by The Skillman Foundation and the U.S. Department of State.

Now the students are doing what professional artists do – displaying their work in a public setting. From September 8 through October 28, 2007, 41 color images by these budding artists – of their families, friends and community – will be exhibited in the Lower Level Gallery at the Arab American National Museum (AANM). The show is free with Museum admission.

And this fall, SURA Arts Academy continues with a new group of Detroit middle school students and new funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. The weekly sessions begin Tuesday, September 18 at Munger Middle School, 5525 Martin Street, Detroit, running through November 27. There is no charge to take part in the program; however, advance registration is required and transportation is not offered. Registration information is available at www.arabamericanmuseum.org or by calling 313.624.0210.

“Sura is an Arabic word for photograph” says Lynn Blasey, the AANM educator who coordinates the program. “The kids learn to operate and care for the camera and how to compose a shot, but the instruction is also a catalyst. As they look through the camera lens, we try to help them develop self-awareness and respect toward others, and give them an idea of how they fit into the broader community they live in.”

Equipped with new digital cameras supplied by the Museum, children of Arab, African, Asian and Latin American descent spent the last year working with professional photographers Joe Namy and Rebecca Cook, both of Detroit, and Nabil Zebib of Dearborn. They led the instructional activities and joined AANM educators in leading cultural discussions and

explorations, helping the students gain insight into issues of identity, ethnicity, diversity and the value of documenting community history. The weekly sessions were held at Detroit's Munger Middle School but also included field trips.

“At this age, kids are so impressionable,” says instructor Nabil Zebib. “We reached out to them, showed them there are fun things to do other than sports, computer games or just hanging around. It was a huge challenge, an exhausting challenge for the instructors. But we fed off each other. We gave the kids the information, and in return, they produced awesome photographs.”

Through a grant from the U.S. Department of State, SURA student photographers held an online cultural exchange with students in the Middle East, who are also learning photography and exhibiting their works as part of a program sponsored by the nonprofit JOHUD organization, based in Amman, Jordan. A video featuring the JOHUD students' work is part of the exhibition.

On Saturday, September 8, the young SURA photographers and their families and friends will gather for an opening reception from noon-2 p.m. at the Museum, including refreshments, a performance by rapper Invincible, and a talk about the program. The public is invited to attend. Please RSVP by calling 313.624.0210.

Created in 1960, The Skillman Foundation is a private philanthropy committed to helping children in metropolitan Detroit by improving their homes, schools and neighborhoods. The goal of the Foundation's programs is to achieve significant results for kids. Skillman grantmaking primarily supports nonprofit organizations and agencies working in six Detroit neighborhoods – Southwest Detroit (Vernor & Chadsey-Condon), Brightmoor, Osborn, Central and Cody-Rouge – and innovative, successful schools throughout the city of Detroit.

The Arab American National Museum documents, preserves, celebrates, and educates the public on the history, life, culture, and contributions of Arab Americans. It serves as a resource to enhance knowledge and understanding about Arab Americans and their presence in this country. The Arab American National Museum is a project of ACCESS, a Dearborn, Michigan-based nonprofit human services and cultural organization. Learn more at www.arabamericanmuseum.org and www.accesscommunity.org.

Museum hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday; noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday, Tuesday; Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$6 for adults; \$3 for students, seniors and children 6-12; ages 5 and under, free. Call 313-582-2266 for further information.

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