

Artists' joys come from

"What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?" asks Dr. Robert Schuller.

Those who participate in artist residencies would attempt just about anything, says Phyllis Dunne, a folk musician and mountain dulcimer player.

"Residencies teach students that it is OK to try new things," said Dunne. She has been an eligible artist for the Nebraska Arts Council's Artists in Schools/Communities program for seven years, and has conducted 76 weeks of residencies.

It's the challenges and rewards from taking those risks - and seeing students experiment as well — that got Dunne and three other longtime AiS/C artists into the NAC's program, and have kept them there for a combined total of 31 years.

Dunne, for example, said she applied to be part of the program because of "the prestige in which its artists were held in the community. I knew that it would open doors to new business and performance opportunities, but mostly I felt that inclusion in the program symbolized 'having arrived' ... of having passed the test of artistic approval."

Duane Hutchinson, a NAC storyteller for 12 years, said he applied for the program with a little "encouragement."

"I was pushed by an Omaha art teacher," Hutchinson said. "She called me long distance every day for a week to get my application in."

Once these artists started working with the NAC, they said they saw just how important it was for them to be in the state's classrooms.

"Working artists provide an opportunity for the students and community to get in on the process, to see things evolve, to see the discipline, to see the boredom and the discoveries, to be a part of the magic," said Mary Halverstadt, an eight-year AiS/C dance artist.

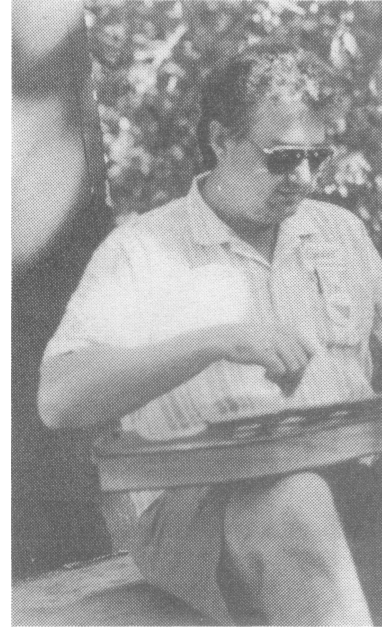
"A working artist is an independent business person who has created a management system of their own in order to live and work," added Susan J. Brasch, a four-year residency artist in visual arts. "Giving students a view of problem solving and how an artist makes the choices and sacrifices for themselves or in regards to a client gives examples of life skills, as well as the further validation that it is possible to consider the arts as a profession."

Dunne and Hutchinson said it's important to have artists in the classroom because of the added excitement they give their art.

"The unusual artist coming in from the outside stimulates ideas, and challenges students and teachers to new areas of expression," said Hutchinson.

"Artists have the advantage of being someone new and excitingly different, thus demanding more attention," added Dunne. "This offers a sense of wonder to the arts, making them more appealing, more special."

Residency experiences don't just



Phyllis Dunne (right), folk music

stay in the classroom, the artists said.

"People in their 20s and early 30s often come up to me and recall stories they heard years ago. Many have reported becoming storytellers for their children," said Hutchinson.

Brasch said she, too, continues to see her residency students.

"Several students, when in Lincoln, have stopped in to visit me in my studio, and several continue to correspond with me via mail and phone," she said. "Even though I spend a relatively short time with them in their school situation, I feel that I am still a continuing resource that is

sharing their passions



Duane Hutchinson, storyteller

Mary Halverstadt, dancer

available to them after the residency.

"Because I am an experimenter at heart and express in several different styles and media, I would hope that the students might be more interested in trying new things and being more open to different approaches and viewpoints," said Brasch.

Halverstadt said she believes her residency students are left with an openness to the world. "And," she added, "perhaps they will discover the joy of doing something for the passion in it - not the dollar sign."

The artists said they have reaped their own rewards from the AiS/C program, too. Dunne explained how she became a true "artist."

When she started the program, Dunne was "woefully lacking in self-confidence."

"I have lifted my self-imposed limitations and been inspired by the accomplishments of others," Dunne laid. "I used to confine myself to solo work, and now appreciate the opportunity to work with others. I am willing to take more artistic risks and have started acting, composing for theater, writing poetry, writing songs and collaborating with other artists."

Brasch said that being a residency artist has made her do more research and more experimentation.

"Finding back-up visuals and examples surely broadens my stimulus and seeing quotient, which in turn adds to my own artwork in some manner," she said.

Hutchinson and Halverstadt pointed out that the residency program gave them more time for their artwork, instead of "survival" work.

"By giving me many audiences, and money enough for survival, I could spend time gathering material and polishing the stories I have," said Hutchinson.

The AiS/C program "has allowed

me to continue in my chosen field and expand my work - without such a support program, it would have been more difficult to continue to grow as a creative person," Halverstadt said.

"I would not give up these eight years as an AiS/C artist," she added. "My growth as an individual and an artist has been overwhelming.

"And what a life to be able to share my passion with others, to help them grow as individuals, to help them see

the world in a different way. What a life!"

"The Nebraska Arts Council has given me the opportunity to grow both professionally and spiritually," added Dunne. "I am able to help others find their potential while I expand my own. The more I give, the more I get. What more could I want?"

"I am," she added, "eternally grateful to the NAC for the experience it has afforded me."

NAC artists explain:

What's the best part of a residency?

- The sharing with the students and community. To be able to open doors and minds is payment beyond the dollar figure.
- Seeing the faces of the children light up, hearing them laugh.
- The opportunity to work with so many wonderful people. The artists, students, administrators, teachers and NAC staff have been incredible. I feel so lucky to be able to work at what I like to do, with people I like to be with.

- Sharing my life's work with others, and seeing and hearing and feeling how they express their experience in their lives on Campus Earth.

What makes a good AiS/C residency?

- A willingness to open the door - for administrators, teachers and students. To take a chance on that new art form, that new stranger.
- Good preparation, involvement of teachers in the program, a clear message from the artist about what is possible to imitate and grow on.
- Good communication. The artist, students teachers and administrators all need to understand what they want to happen and then see that it does.
- Clear communication about the projects/where they would best fit into the present curriculum, how it can relate to a prior unit or project, budget considerations for materials, and an overview of the project in an in-service with teachers and administration.