

# ART ON WHEELS

STORY BY LESLIE K. HUGHES



*It is no secret that when schools face budget cuts, art classes are typically the first to go. They are deemed superfluous and not a crucial piece of the core STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education model. Phoenix Center for the Arts has made it its goal to challenge the classification of art as expendable via the Art4All Mobile.*

**T**HE ART4ALL MOBILE IS A COMMUNITY outreach program that brings art to students around the Valley whose lives otherwise would be void of exposure to this pivotal piece of their education. Joseph Benesh, director of Phoenix Center for the Arts, describes the objective of the Art4All Mobile as a way to “serve the children and families that don’t have the resources to buy [art] classes and events,” specifically targeting those who cannot afford art outside of the classroom. “I was one of those families growing up,” says Benesh, “so I know what it’s like choosing whether to put food on the table or pay for an art class.” Art4All Mobile does not want people to have to make exclusive decisions like that; the program allows families free exposure to and involvement in the arts—from breakdancing to ceramics and everything in between.

Just two months and four trial runs into the Art4All Mobile’s inception, the program has reached more than 600 students in the Phoenix area. Phoenix Center for the Arts, along with its Art4All Mobile partners from Valley Leadership Class 35, has set its goal to reach 1,000 to 2,000 students in the program’s first year. “Beyond the numbers, we want to make sure that the children and the people we interact with understand the involvement of the arts in their community,” Benesh says. Art4All Mobile has done

this by creating a pre- and post-survey to determine the participants’ experience in the arts.

The people behind Art4All Mobile have thought a great deal about the effect art has on communities as a whole, and individuals as well. Benesh feels proud that “we are cultivating art enthusiasts. If they don’t become an artist, they at least appreciate the arts.”

The future of Art4All Mobile looks bright and certainly has the potential to grow immensely. Benesh hopes for additional art mobiles that would allow them to share the vital exposure to art with residents in need across the state of Arizona. “On the surface, you can see that we are improving the lives of these kids just with their smiles and getting messy with the art,” Benesh says. However, he sees a much deeper impact of the Art4All Mobile: “We are teaching [the students’] brains things they don’t know. The arts provide this cross-hemisphere brain operation—a new way to learn that academics do not provide.”

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*ART4ALL MOBILE*  
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