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SAAC Announces New Sites for Art Partners

STARKVILLE, MS -

SAAC's after-school educational program Art Partners has reorganized and relaunched, with new site partners for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Art Partners falls under the umbrella of SAAC's art education outreach, which seeks to create access to the arts, promote creative educational opportunities, and connect artists with young minds. SAAC believes that creativity must be exercised like a muscle and develops young minds, regardless of future career choice.

This year's sites include:

- Sudduth Extended Day Program
- Starkville Housing Authority's Goal Setters Program (located at Pecan Acres)
- Youth Explosion (located at Christian World Mission)

These sites reach a wide cross section of Starkville's youth. SAAC provides these classes for no additional cost to the existing after-school programs run by those sites OR the students enrolled in those programs. Classes are taught by Teaching Artist Gerard Woods.

Starkville Housing Authority Executive Director Amy Bishop says, "I feel the SAAC program is a great opportunity for our housing authority children to be exposed to the world of art on a more in-depth level. I hope that our participants use what they learn about art as a way to express themselves."

Amy McReynolds, Sudduth Elementary Art Teacher and Extended Day Liaison, says the following. "It takes at least three significant experiences for a student, especially one from a challenged background, to pursue and fulfill their passion. I think the after-school program ART PARTNERS provides such an experience and gives students who may not otherwise be able to participate an opportunity to develop their 'SPARK.'" Regarding Teaching Artist Woods, McReynolds adds, "The kids at Sudduth adore Gerard. Our director said the kids literally run up to great and hug him with a huge smile on their faces.....so eager to participate each week."

"A program like this gives our students opportunities to explore a whole new world and a new part of themselves that may not have been available without Gerard and both of our programs," says Youth Explosion Program Director Maggie Conner.



Art Partners Chair and SAAC Board Member Allison Julien notes: "We are so excited to expand Art Partners to a new variety of locations and ages across Starkville. We hope to further stimulate interest and passion in the arts (and creative thinking) not just in the classroom here and now, but also at home and in the children's futures."

"Our expansion comes after much thoughtful reorganization over the past fiscal year with Allison," says Executive Director John W. Bateman. "She and I made a commitment to explore different ways to improve and expand this little-known program, and artist Gerard Woods is fantastic in the classroom. A donation from Starkville Bridges Out of Poverty helped us expand sooner than we'd anticipated."

Parents whose children are part of the existing after-school programs at these three site partners should contact the program directly with questions about how their child may participate in the extracurricular art classes.

About SAAC

Now commencing its third decade, the Starkville Area Arts Council sponsors the Cotton District Arts Festival, runs various outreach programs, and awards almost \$25,000 each year in grants and scholarships throughout Starkville and Oktibbeha County in its mission to build a strong, creative, connected community through the arts. The Starkville Area Arts Council (SAAC) appreciates the support of the City of Starkville and the Greater Starkville Development Partnership, Oktibbeha County, National Endowment for the Arts, Mississippi Arts Commission, Visit Mississippi, Del Rendon Foundation, 4-County Electric Foundation, and various local businesses and individuals. Additional information about SAAC can be found at www.starkvillearts.org.

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