

Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

A showcase to the world

By **Sheila Ahern**

Daily Herald Staff Writer

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Back in the day, kids used to leap off the school bus, artwork in hand, ready to hand it over to mom and dad for display on the family refrigerator.

The only problem was that artwork — typically consisting of strategically placed uncooked macaroni on construction paper — had a shelf life of only a few weeks.

Times have changed.

Welcome to the new era of children's art projects. Today, the Internet gives kids a chance to showcase their artwork to the world, and parents a chance to keep it forever.

Recently, Dryden Elementary School art teacher Tricia Fuglestad won a national award for using a virtual children's art gallery where teachers and parents can upload their kids' work for free.

The site, www.artsonia.com, showcases more than one million pieces of artwork from thousands of schools across the nation. Fuglestad's site is the most viewed link in Illinois and the fourth most viewed site in the country.

"Parents used to say how bad they felt when the time came to throw out or recycle their kids' artwork," Fuglestad said. "Now, they don't have to do that."

Last year, Fuglestad posted almost 3,000 Dryden art pieces on the site that has 1,231 active members.

Artsonia.com gives children a worldwide audience for their art, and parents a chance to clear the clutter. On the site, kids post artwork for their family and friends not only to look at but to comment on. Soon, every fifth-grader who graduates from Dryden Elementary school will have a disc with all their artwork — from kindergarten through fifth-grade.

Fans of a student's artwork can even buy the piece on a T-shirt, mug or mouse pad, with a portion of the sale going back to Dryden. Last year, Fuglestad raised more than \$1,000 for Dryden through the Web site.

Often the Web address is given to family and friends who live away from the area and would otherwise have no way of seeing the student's work.

Students have a stream of positive feedback and reinforcement. The site has even given the students an avenue to compliment one another. Parents check all friends and comments before they are posted.

Check out the art of Dryden Elementary School art students at <http://www.artsonia.com>. Residents can also check out Fuglestad's home page at www.ahsd25.k12.il.us/~TriciaFuglestad/VisualArt/index.html

sahern@dailyherald.com

dailyherald.com