

# ONE ON ONE

By Vicki Stavig

Many of us are quick to talk—or write—about the virtues of art. It is, we say, much more than a pretty painting or sculpture. It enriches our lives, lifts our spirits, and instills in us a sense of wonder.

While we are quick to share our views with anyone who will listen, there are others who are doing much more than simply talking about the importance of art. Two of those people are award-winning artist Kevin Macpherson and his wife Wanda, who founded Art Ambassador For a Colorful World, a non-profit organization, that is bringing art into the lives of children in the United States, Mexico, China, and Guatemala, with plans to expand the program to Southeast Asia.

“Art is an avenue of peace to the mind and soul,” says Macpherson. That is especially important to underprivileged young people living in areas that offer little hope for the future. Art Ambassador For a Colorful World uses art classes to engage those children in education and to ignite their creative sparks. But there is more—much more—to it. Macpherson and others involved in the organization strongly believe that, through creating art, children also will develop life skills that include cooperation, confidence, and leadership.

“The future for many of these children is not bright, and household incomes are quite low,” says Jack Vogler, president of Art Ambassador For a Colorful World. “As a result of our work, these people are given hope and something to look forward to in life. We are not suggesting that all of them become artists, of course, but the idea of hope through art is the kicker.”

The organization also provides teacher education and last year awarded its first student scholarship—the Mariposa Scholarship—to Walter Sacarias Perez Lopez, a young man living in Guatemala, who used it to study with noted Guatemalan artist Mariano Gonzales. “I am so proud of Walter’s progress,” Macpherson says. “He literally had few choices beyond a life picking corn, but now I know his life will be changed forever and his dream come true to be an artist.”

In late July, the Macphersons and Vogler were plan-



Kevin Macpherson, Art Ambassador For A Colorful World, GanGu Village, Elementary School, Yunnan Province, China

ning to travel to Guatemala, where they were going to provide art instruction to grade school children and to work with Lopez to create a mural that would depict the story of Popol Vuh, the story of the dawn of life and the glories of gods and kings in the ancient Mayan culture, Vogler says.

Over the years, Macpherson has mentored aspiring artists in more than a dozen countries and is committed to making a difference in their lives, even going so far as to learn Chinese in order to better serve children in that country. “Art,” he says, “has an unexplained way of reminding one of the beauty and serenity that surrounds us, even in the most chaotic situations. It can expand life’s possibilities.”

Vogler is justifiably proud and more than a little excited about having arranged for an exhibit of works by some of the children involved in the program in China and Guatemala. That exhibit will be conducted at the prestigious Salmagundi Club in New York City during the third week of September 2016. Meanwhile, work continues to expand this unique program.

“Perhaps my highest priority right now is fund raising,” Vogler says. “To date, AAFACW has been a self-funded venture. Kevin has dug deeply into his own pockets and underwritten the activities he’s started.”

If you would like to do more than talk about the importance of art, helping to fund this exciting and innovative program would be a good place to start. For information on how to make a donation, visit the organization’s web site at [www.artambassador.org](http://www.artambassador.org).



Guatemala, Las Nubes Middle School  
Not bad for their first plein air painting!

Vicki Stavig is editor of *Art of the West*.