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**Scholastic Awards break records, set the talent bar high
Despite January 'snowmageddon', committed teachers motivate students**

January 23, 2014 (Fort Wayne, IN) – Since 2004, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art has been the regional hub for the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, a national program organized by the New York-based Alliance for Young Artists and Writers which identifies teenagers with exceptional creative talent and brings their remarkable work to a national audience through the Awards. Today, many know this FWMoA program as one of its most successful, but it hasn't always been that way.

"Our chapter of the program was at the bottom of the heap, compared to other regional programs across the country," said Max Meyer, director of children's education at FWMoA. "Our lack of investment in this program meant our students and teachers didn't receive very much national attention."

That low-level of performance with any FWMoA program, especially one that had the potential to mold the future of our region's children, didn't sit well with Charles Shepard, who became Executive Director in 2003. "I was determined to turn this program around not just for the Museum, but for the students, teachers, and parents."

By 2013, the FWMoA chapter of the Scholastic Awards (which includes 52 counties in NE Indiana and NW Ohio) had reached national acclaim and was ranked fourth in the nation for its number of students receiving awards at the national level. 2013 was also the year the FWMoA region saw the highest ratio of entries to national awards in the country. To top that, FWMoA was awarded the 2013 Gold Key for Excellence in the Field, a prestigious award given to one region each year by the Alliance and accepted on stage in Carnegie Hall.

The accolades came only after significant FWMoA investments of time and resources in the program, which also means an investment in the community. "The Midwest doesn't have to mean mediocre," said Shepard. "This is the mantra for this program, something our teachers, especially, have internalized. Without their hard work and dedication, the student art and writing really wouldn't measure up."

For 2014, the dramatic winter weather of early January threatened to throw the whole program off course. "Most participating schools canceled the days when students and teachers would have been busy submitting their art and writing online. Two days before the deadline, we only had 500 entries," said Meyer. But on the last day of submission, nearly 4,300 entries had been submitted, marking 2014 as a record-high year for art and writing entries. "The teachers deserve so much credit for that," said Meyer.

The Scholastic Awards Ceremony for 2014 will welcome some luminaries to the stage, with Mayor Tom Henry delivering the welcome address, and former Scholastic award winner Brett Golliff, a graduate of Angola High School, speaking to the crowd about his fascinating career designing New Balance sneakers and now as Color and Trim Lead Designer with General Motors and a lead designer of the Detroit Auto Show car of the year, the 2015 Corvette Stingray z06. The Awards Ceremony is held at the Grand Wayne Center on February 9 for all participants and award winners of the program and their families.

The 2014 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards is made possible by support from The Carlie Cunningham Foundation, The Fort Wayne Art League, Indiana Wesleyan University, IPFW College of Visual and

Performing Arts, the Indiana Arts Commission, the Dunsire Family Foundation, The News-Sentinel, Northeast Indiana Public Radio, and Galliher Photography.

About the Fort Wayne Museum of Art: Beginning with art classes in 1888 given by J. Ottis Adams and later William Forsyth, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art has evolved into a center for the visual arts community in Northeast Indiana. Regularly exhibiting regional and nationally acclaimed artists, the FWMoA also boasts an extensive permanent collection of American Art as well as prints and drawings from artists such as Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol. The Museum is committed to the collection, preservation, presentation and interpretation of American and related art to engage broad and diverse audiences throughout the community and region, and add value to their lives. The Fort Wayne Museum of Art is a funded partner of Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne.

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