

# The Global Art Initiative



Left to right: John Paul Joseph; Students from Faith Academy Junior High School.

## Laurie Berg, Samantha Melvin, and Fred Sorrells

In February 2009, three friends in a small town came together to support the vision of ending the poverty cycle for disabled artists in the Third World. Dr. Fred Sorrells had traveled to Haiti as part of his initiative to form Paralympics sport teams in countries that have often neglected disabled members of their community. There, he came upon different artists who needed support, and he saw the opportunity to create a special initiative called the Global Art Initiative (GAIN).

With passion for art and compassion for humanity, GAIN has established itself with artists from Haiti and Kenya. Its mission is to break the cycle of poverty for disabled artists in Third World countries while raising the status of the disabled in the emerging world within the next generation. It is a nonprofit organization focused

on education and the sale of original artwork to benefit handicapped artists globally. Our hope is that through their experience with GAIN, people young and old will take compassionate action and become donors in the larger shared humanitarian project.

### Creating Awareness

In Haiti, Dr. Sorrells met John Paul Joseph and Herold Alvares, who are both missing arms and legs due to congenital birth defects. They showed him the incredible artwork they had completed despite severe physical limitations. Through GAIN, we can all learn from John Paul and Herold.

The lessons tie in with character education, global awareness, and empathy. How are we different from one another? How are we the same? These questions arise no matter our heritage, our origin, or

physical well-being. When children see someone who is physically challenged, their lack of understanding of that disability can breed intolerance and neglect. Part of the awareness-raising initiative is to break down the cycle of neglect and create appreciation for the gifts of individuals.

As artists, teachers, and especially as art educators, we work hard to break down social injustices in society through art and discussion. By sharing the gifts of these artists, young artists have gained a greater understanding of ability, mobility and tolerance. The Global Crutch Project was created to do just that.

### The Global Crutch Project

The Global Crutch Project targets polio victims and others in need of mobility. GAIN collects donated crutches and students turn them into artworks of love by decorating them with permanent markers. Imagine children's artwork created with loving care walking the streets of the emerg-

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