

CURRENTS & ARTS

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**OZZIE
ROBERTS**

MAKING IT



Teen aides help paint a lovely picture

Almost immediately, you notice something admirable and reaffirming in Tim Kebler, Katherine Outland, Tara Erwin and the 17 other youngsters who help run Point Loma Arts Academy.

That something becomes especially clear in the way they talk and walk around the grounds of All Souls' Episcopal Church, which houses the 17-year-old summer arts-enrichment program for kids.

Tim, Katherine, Tara and their counterparts, who range from 12 to 16 years old, are called "teen aides."

Primarily, they assist nearly a dozen teachers who give younger children — between 6 and 12 years old — hands-on experiences that instill appreciation for art and its impact on us all.

Ninety young ones have enrolled in the three-week program, which ends Aug. 1.

Daily from 9 a.m. until noon, kids like Tim, 12, guide students like Lara Greiert, 8, through such activities as singing, dancing, sculpting and painting.

Lara begged her parents to sign her up for the academy, mainly because she loves the arts — drawing and painting, specifically.

After her first day, she was impressed, especially with the way the older kids had helped all go so smoothly. She was extremely anxious to return the next day.

Teen aides receive small stipends. But

Roberts

Teen aides guide smaller charges in art

Continued from E-1

the glitter of silver and gold doesn't move them.

"I love to work with the younger kids — I like being a helper," says Tim. "The younger ones really look up to you and I like being a good role model."

All of that, indeed, is welcome encouragement for Mary Keller and Terry Antl, co-directors of the academy.

They know the program is most effective and has always been extremely popular in the Point Loma and Ocean Beach areas since the church started it in 1980 as a kind of community outreach ministry.

It was started to counter the effects of elimination of some arts programs from public schools amid fiscal belt-tightening under passage of Proposition 13.

Traditionally, most of the youngsters who sign on to be aides have gone through the program as students. And Keller and Antl know that the aides' influence is responsible for a large part of the academy's success.

"We're not trying to create little Da Vincis here," says Keller.

"We're trying to tap into the children's deep creativity, recognizing that each child is a wellspring of ideas and talent."

That's so much easier to do with the help of some dedicated aides, the co-director adds.

Especially over the next five

years, the program will rely on the aides even more.

In June, administrators established the academy as a nonprofit operation, independent of the church. That was the beginning of a 5-year plan to expand the programs into other neighborhoods in the county and into Mexico, Keller says.

She says the program still will charge \$220 tuition and will continue to provide scholarships for needy children. But the move toward more autonomy will allow it to broaden its support base. Now, donors, mostly from the church parish, form the program's major source of financial assistance.

But the program's life still depends on what keeps the youngsters coming back. And in that, the young aides are key.

Keller's 12-year-old daughter, Annika, like her best friend Katherine Outland, has been around the program for most of her life.

Annika says she recognized long ago that more than the good art education kept her wanting to come back every summer. Katherine, a graphic artist who has become the academy's own resident computer whiz, makes a similar observation.

"There's no peer pressure here," says Annika. "Here, you can be yourself and everyone helps bring out the best in you."

Says Katherine: "I love the people. I love helping. And that makes it fun being here."

For more information about the Point Loma Arts Academy, contact Mary Keller at (619) 226-8121 or Terry Antl at (619) 222-7394.

See **ROBERTS** on Page E-3