Supporting each other

Cornelia Naylor, The Times

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The School District 33 High School Art Show brings together student artists from all three of Chilliwack's public high schools, but those looking for a winner-take-all art showdown will be sorely disappointed.

"We want to build a visual arts community in Chilliwack," said Sardis art teacher Sandra Wiens, organizer of this year's show.

An important part of the event, to her, is the chance it gives young artists to find their own tribe.

Sardis secondary Grade 12 student Shawnee Kruger throws a piece of pottery during Pierre Tremblay's ceramics class Wednesday. Kruger is one of the local students whose work will be exhibited at the 2010 High School Art Show opening at the Artist's Gallery at the Chilliwack Art Centre tomorrow.

"We try to tell them that those personal connections are really important," she said. "They have to support each other because it's a hard career to go into."

For local art enthusiasts, there is, of course, also the art.

The show, which opens tomorrow at the Artist's Gallery at the Chilliwack Art Centre, once again promises to deliver an eyeful of adventurous art in a variety of media including drawing, painting, mixed media, photography, ceramics, computer graphics and printmaking.

Art teachers at each of the three schools selected the pieces, and about 90 students in Grades 10, 11 and 12 will have a chance to see their work framed, mounted and ogled.

For Sardis art teacher Peter Tremblay, that's all part of the magic of the show.
"It's quite neat when you see your own work framed in an art gallery," he said. "It's very different from being in a studio working on it."

The show also gives parents a rare chance to see what kids are creating in studios around the city.

"When your kids are playing sports, what do you do? You go to their games," he said. "So if you have kids involved in an art program, what do you do? You go to an art show."

Doubtless, similar sentiments are what motivated former Chilliwack senior secondary art teacher Jerry Coffman to start up the show back in the late 1970s.

He dubbed it the Chilliwack Senior Art Show. Sardis didn't join until the 1990s and new kids on the block, G.W. Graham, came on board only two years ago.

In the beginning, the art was displayed in the public library. As the show grew, it moved first to the museum and then to the art gallery.

Wiens knows firsthand how important the show has been to aspiring artists in the city. She had her own work in the show in the 1980s as a Chilliwack secondary student before going on to post-secondary studies at the prestigious Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

And every year there are other students who plan to pursue a life of art.

Sardis Grade 11 student Marissa Goodvin is one of these. She plans to take up writing and art--a double whammy.

When asked what her response is to people who suggest she might be eating hotdogs all her life, her answer is uncompromising.

"It's what I want to do," she said.

- The show will be up until May 19. Tomorrow's opening runs from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

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