

2 Westside groups get grants for youth programs

■ National Endowment for the Arts gives \$10,000 each to Venice Arts Mecca and Da Camera Society.

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VENICE—Irving Quintero, 12, proudly points to a photograph of his left hand, the digits deformed into little nubs since birth.

"I like my hands because they're different than other kids' hands," he says, a smile plain on his face. "My picture says that I'm different."

Irving is among more than 100 youths participating in Venice Arts Mecca's ArtPartners program, which received a much needed \$10,000 grant earlier this month from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The federal agency awarded grants to 156 organizations across the nation, including two on the Westside: Venice Arts Mecca and the Da Camera Society of Mount Saint Mary's College in Brentwood, which also received \$10,000.

For the last year, ArtPartners has provided three eight-week programs to youths ranging in age from 6 to 13 at the Venice-based Neighborhood Youth Assn. and at Mar Vista Gardens, Washington Way and Tabor Courts, all low-income housing facilities on the Westside. The workshops introduce children to dance, acting and photography, as well as digital and literary arts.

In Mar Vista Gardens, youths participating in ArtPartners say they are afraid to go out after dark because of neighborhood gang violence. The photography classes are not an escape, however. They are a way to channel the emotional and often provocative observations that their young eyes can capture.



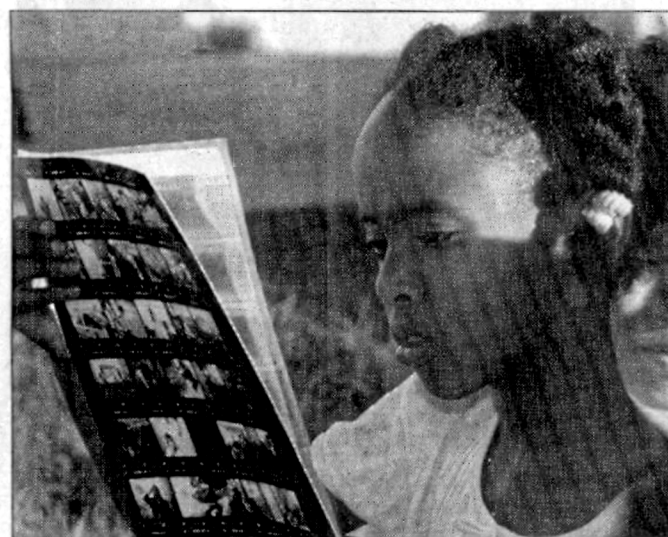
Josie Zamudio, right, an instructor at Venice Arts Mecca, assists Irving Quintero, 10, left, and Karina Solis, 11, in a photography workshop at Mar Vista Gardens.

Photographs from their latest course, which soon will hang from the walls of Mar Vista Gardens' recreation center, include images of empty beer cans rolling over the pavement, a mural stained with graffiti and children playing by the banks of an arid Los Angeles River.

"The pictures tell you more about the whole community, who people are," said Pedro Coreas, 10, who lives in Mar Vista Gardens and participated in ArtPartners.

"They tell you what type of people are here."

With the assistance of the endowment grant, Venice Arts Mecca will expand ArtPartners from nine months to a year-round program. Moreover, the grant will allow the arts center to pair more



Venice Arts Mecca student Edén Kiflezgi, 6, checks her contact sheets and negatives from a recent photo shoot.

youths with artists who double as mentors.

The Da Camera Society of Mount Saint Mary's College will use its grant to form a partnership with Camp Fred C. Miller, a juvenile detention facility in Malibu.

Together, the two institutions will provide young detainees with intensive workshops in African and Afro-Latin drumming, which are expected to start in February.

"We're going to offer exercises in drumming that focus on the healing power of that experience," said MaryAnn Bonino, founding director of the Da Camera Society. "And we hope that the youths that are in the camp will come away with a tool kit for personal transportation."

For Venice Arts Mecca,

the grant, which accounts for nearly 10% of its annual budget, comes at a key time, said Jim Hubbard, creative director.

"We couldn't do the program in the way we're doing it now without the



The ice cream vendor at Mar Vista Gardens made an interesting photo subject for Pedro Coreas, 10.

grant," he said.

Although the grant helps, art programs that serve low-income families always need more support, Hubbard said.

"It'll go a long way this year," he said. "But it won't be nearly enough."