

## Black Rock Art Center helping kids-at-risk

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"Running Free," a photograph by Tony Bocchetta of Georgetown, will be featured in the show at the Black Rock Art Center.

Concerned area artists and musicians will work in concert during the next few weeks to raise funds for the region's needy and homeless children.

Bridgeport's Black Rock Art Center will team with Harmony4Kidz — a fledgling Fairfield-based organization established in 2007 to help homeless youth through music-related fundraisers — to present an art show and concert.

"Artists Who Care," an exhibition about children, will feature approximately 40 paintings, mixed-media works, sculpture and photography from Connecticut artists. It will open Thursday, July 10, with a free reception from 6 to 9 p.m. at the center in

Bridgeport's Black Rock section.

All the works will be available for purchase, with a percentage of the proceeds benefiting the nonprofit arts center and Harmony4Kidz. The show will be on display through Aug. 24.

Among the featured artists will be Kelly Bigelow Becerra of Bridgeport, James Napoleon of Kent, Elizabeth Madden and Tony Bocchetta, both of Georgetown, and Kathi Sorrentino, a student at Fairfield University. And then on July 19 from 7:30 to 11 p.m., Harmony4Kidz founder and president Irena Makarchuk will present an Artists Who Care concert at the center to benefit her organization.

Featured will be Makarchuk — a guitarist, singer and songwriter — and her band, Bermuda Road, along with The Blue Joy Project, Daria Musk Trio, Laura Sumner and Lisa Bastoni. Jim Saxon, host of "Radio Romance," on Fairfield University's WVOF 88.5 FM radio, will host the event.

"Uplifting, positive and upbeat" is the way Makarchuk describes the featured groups, which will perform "music that inspires harmony, peace and happiness." Spiritual music, Americana and jazz are on the bill.

Tickets in advance are \$12, \$15 if purchased at the door.

Makarchuk says she hopes the benefit events will create more awareness for her organization.

"We are relatively new, and a lot of our work has been in the planning stages. To have this art exhibit happening in our community this summer, and see the huge enthusiasm of the artists who are coming forward is really encouraging to us.

"I know it will make an enormous difference in our

community, and it will show the homeless youths that they do matter and that they are not invisible," she adds.

Makarchuk says that her organization is in the lengthy process of seeking tax exempt status under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code as a nonprofit agency.

Born in Kiev, Ukraine, Makarchuk moved to the United States when she was 12 years old. In her previous career as a mechanical engineer, Makarchuk says she was instrumental in designing several inventions and securing patents for a number of Connecticut engineering firms.

The singer-songwriter says she was inspired to found Harmony4Kids following a chance meeting in 2006 with numerous homeless children in Manhattan.

"We were doing a concert at Union Square . . . and I ran across a group of kids — 200 of them — who were homeless. I was so moved by that experience, that I came home and wrote a song, 'Save the World.'"

That song was the catalyst for the formation of Harmony4Kidz, Makarchuk says.

Eventually she wants Harmony4Kidz to organize scores of musical fundraisers for children's programs, in league with other area social service organizations. She also would like to raise funds for the building of children's shelters in Bridgeport and near Union Square.

Melissa A. Bernstein, general manager of the art center, says the upcoming events will help to further the efforts of both organizations.

"First and foremost, the Black Rock Art Center is a

community organization. And anything that concerns our neighborhood is of concern to us."

The Black Rock Art Center is at 2838 Fairfield Ave. in Bridgeport. It is open Tuesday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m., and by appointment. For more information about the gallery, call 367-7917 or visit [www.blackrockartcenter.org](http://www.blackrockartcenter.org).

For additional information on the children's group, visit [www.harmony4kidz.org](http://www.harmony4kidz.org).