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North High art teacher Frank Juarez explains a concept to Samuel Jensen during an art class Tuesday in Sheboygan. Juarez is the founder of a project called Midwest Art Studios. As part of the project, he and three others traveled the Midwest to interview, photograph and videotape artists. They'll make two more trips in future summers and will use the real-life scenarios they encounter to help create a curriculum for teachers to use.



SUBMITTED

North High art teacher Frank Juarez and his Midwest Artist Studios team traveled to four states last month to interview, photograph and videotape contemporary artists at work. Jane Ryder, of Oskaloosa, Iowa, is one of the artists the team visited.

The artist's way



By Kali Thiel
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North High School art teacher Frank Juarez wants students to know that artists aren't just limited to big-city dwellers who work in impressive studios and sell paintings for millions of dollars.

Oftentimes, an artist's lifestyle is much humbler than that, he said. "Some students would think of an artist like that," Juarez said. "That's kind of a glorified stereotype for an artist. ... But your next door neighbor who's a dentist may be an outstanding photographer, or your cousin may be a painter, but her studio is in her kitchen."

In order to demonstrate that point to students and to connect them with contemporary artists, Juarez founded Midwest Artist Studios.

Through the project, Juarez and three team members will travel throughout the Midwest to interview, photograph and videotape various artists and capture them at work in their environments. The materials then will be compiled into an approximately 100-page catalog and a companion

North High teacher hopes new project inspires young artists to pursue their passion

workbook that offers lessons for teachers.

"We're creating a platform to provide educators with the means of incorporating more ideas into their curriculum," Juarez said. "It's really about providing students these real life scenarios to encourage them to pursue something that they really love."

In addition to the workbook and catalog, each of the featured artists also have agreed to be available as a resource to teachers in the classroom via Skype or in-person visits, when feasible.

"I would say that's probably the most exciting part of this project is just having that interaction," Juarez said. "It's really cool to hear about the work that was created from the artist. The artist is basically the expert and so students can actually interact with those artists

in real time."

The Midwest Artist Studios group returned on Aug. 10 from the first of three trips they'll make over the course of three years. For their first trip, the team traveled to Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri and different parts of Wisconsin to meet with nine artists.

The featured artists worked out of places such as garages, basements, attics and university art studios, and their work spaces ranged in size from a 10-by-10 room to one that was 2,000 square feet, said Juarez.

"Bottom line, they're following something that they're really passionate about," he said.

Juarez himself is a demonstration of the varied lifestyles artists maintain. In addition to being a teacher at North — a position he's held for the past 14 years — Juarez is a practicing artist and owns

his own art studio in downtown Sheboygan. He's also a member of the Wisconsin Arts Board.

"It's pretty powerful when you have a leading educator in their field in your building," North High Principal Jason Bull said. "He's including the latest and greatest art standards in the work and it'll be bringing real life applications in the arts, so it's really at the forefront of curricular work that we're asking other teachers to do as well."

Before he started the project, Juarez said he sent out an informal survey to 50 teachers from the Midwest asking them if they used local artists in their classrooms.

Most came back with answers of "no" due to a lack of funding, a lack of resources and a lack of time. Those responses further motivated Juarez to come up with a way to help teachers expose students to different, contemporary artists.

He's hoping that ultimately, his work will inspire students.

"I'm trying to have this project become an encouragement for students to follow their passion," Juarez said. "It is about education, but it's also about pursuing something you're interested in."

— Reach Kali Thiel at 920-453-5134

EDUCATION NOTES

Sheboygan schools receive awards

secutive year Grant has received the recognition and the seventh time for



of \$130,660. Expenses, budgeted at \$22.8 million, are largely

Retirees invited to join Riverview Band