

Editor's Letter

When the earthquake hit Haiti last January, my immediate concern was for its people, especially for its artists. I have long been engrossed in Haitian art, known around the world for its distinctive paintings, iron metalwork, and sequined flags. My interest grew from my work on an exhibition teacher guide and a commercial curriculum package about Haitian art and culture some time ago, and from my school's recent involvement in the Global Crutch Project (www.globalartinitiative.org/projects/crutchproject.html).

With the earthquake, an already difficult situation for Haitian artists became even more disastrous as crushing injuries disabled so many other people. We doubled our efforts to collect crutches and walkers and to decorate as many as we could.

Everyone seemed to understand our efforts (Who wouldn't prefer a decorated crutch over a plain one?), and the people of Haiti became real to my students, who felt that they could make a difference. They experienced compassion.

Compassion is an aspect of Caring, one of the "Six Pillars of Character" in Character Counts!®, a character education program my school uses that is centered on basic ethical values that are not religious, political, or culturally biased. The six pillars are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Every six weeks my entire school focuses on one of these, with readings shared daily by students on the morning announcements in both English and Spanish. The pillar of caring—being kind, and helping people in need—was expressed through our crutches.

I continue to be amazed and thankful that just about everyone seems to intuitively under-



Nancy with Samantha Melvin and Laurie Berg, founders of the Global Crutch Project, when Nancy delivered crutches decorated by her students.

stand and accept that art can best express concerns for other people. And lest you think one person cannot make a difference, take note of all the projects detailed in this issue that are the result of one or two people beginning with just an idea and determination. You and your students can make a difference!

With this issue, we are delighted to introduce a number of new features, especially an innovative approach to our pull-out resource, Looking and Learning. Looking and Learning now features many images by a variety of artists, and explores "big" or "enduring" ideas expressed through contemporary art and art from other times and places.

We also welcome new columns by contributing editors Theresa McGee (Tech4ArtEd), Martin Rayala (Design Thinking), and Pam Stephens (Art Teacher's Round Table). And, we welcome you back to school!