



*Nancy in front of a Shepard Fairey mural in Austin, Texas. Fairey is known for his street art, often about political or social issues, designed to make a difference in the minds of his viewers. Photo by Bill Yarborough.*

## Editor's Letter

If you are like most art teachers, you are the only such teacher in your school, a situation that can feel very isolating. Yet you should never underestimate the power of one. Individuals, working alone or in collaboration, can develop projects that have the power to draw attention to possibilities for change. It doesn't always take a lot of people to make a difference in the lives of those around them. All that is needed is an idea or cause that you believe has significance, energy, and persistence.

Artists, young, old, and every age in between, can utilize the power of art to express points of view about social issues and concerns, and try to influence people's thinking, emotions, and attitudes. What better way to share how each of us can make our world a better place than through art?

For instance, Maya Lin was just a twenty-one-year-old Yale University student when her design was chosen for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, completed in 1982 in Washington, DC. One of the first large collaborative art projects was the

Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, founded in 1985 by Cleve Jones as a celebration of the lives of people who have died of AIDS-related causes. It is the largest piece of community folk art in the world.

*SchoolArts* is proud to regularly profile arts-based social justice projects developed by artists and teachers. Most of them have grown into national or international programs from the initial ideas of just one or two people, nourished and disseminated by the Internet.

For example, the Memory Project, ([www.memoryproject.org](http://www.memoryproject.org)) an initiative in which art students create portraits for orphaned and disadvantaged children and teens around the world, was started by Ben Schumaker, a graduate student at the time, who was inspired by a 2003 visit to an orphanage in Guatemala. Through the Memory Project, student artists have now created more than 30,000 portraits for kids in thirty-three countries.

Even more amazing role models are found in Ann Ayers and Ellen McMillan, two high-school art teachers at Monarch High School in Coconut Creek, Florida. They started Pinwheels for Peace in 2005 to mark International Day of Peace on September 21. Pinwheels for Peace ([www.pinwheelsforpeace.com](http://www.pinwheelsforpeace.com)) has grown from 500,000 pinwheels planted the first year, to 3.5 million pinwheels in 2010.

These amazing teachers didn't stop with that one project. They have also started Haiti Houses ([www.haitihouses.org](http://www.haitihouses.org)) to raise money for earthquake survivors in Haiti and, most recently, Wings for Angels ([www.wingsforangels.org](http://www.wingsforangels.org)), a project that provides support for sick children and their families (featured in this issue on page 36). Their websites are beautiful as well as functional and provide through one website, Powerful Projects ([www.powerfulprojects.org](http://www.powerfulprojects.org)), easy access to their programs and other significant social justice projects.

From all these examples, it should be clear that artists and teachers can make a difference. Your students can make a difference, and you, too, can make a difference. Never underestimate the power of one.

*Nancy Walker*

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