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Instructors pour art and soul into Dorchester art program

By **Jessica Van Sack**

Sunday, July 1, 2007 - Updated: 12:08 AM EST

The Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts was about to cancel its seven-week summer program, which provides kids and teens with a rare opportunity to paint and be creative.

A last-minute fund-raiser that brought in \$10,000 to the starving center allowed the program to continue this summer. But to expand its teen painting program, the center needs more funding.

Still, Liz Carney, a teacher at the Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts, spent \$40 of her own money last week on a couple of gallons of acrylic paint. Her students are told to water down the paint to stretch the supply.

"An art program has a special meaning," said the center's unpaid director, Leslie MacWeeney. "It not only gets them off the street, but it gives them a chance to do something they might not otherwise do," she said, referring to well-publicized cuts to arts programs in public schools in Boston.

At one of the center's makeshift studios in a sweltering hot Dorchester warehouse, Freiter Guerrero, 15, of Roslindale, said he'd probably be at home trying to find something to do if not for the twice-a-week painting program.

Asked what he'd like to change about the program, he quickly replied, "more days."

Carney and MacWeeney said they'd like to expand the program to three days, but, as they put it, "art is expensive."

They estimate needing at least \$10,000 more to do so, with large canvases costing as much as \$2,000 apiece and the incidental costs such as food adding up.

"They come here hungry," Carney said.

To donate, call 617-265-3503 or e-mail leslie@dotart.org.

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