

## Colleagues of the Arts Open Doors to a Better Future



Photo: Paifrice Ward

**Local students benefit from training and scholarships provided through the Colleagues of the Arts program, especially crucial after arts programs have been cut in many schools.**

**S**adly, in tough economic times, the arts are among the first programs to be eliminated by our educational system. Even in good times, students can benefit enormously from additional professional instruction in order to realize their full artistic potential. But the expense of such tutoring can be high, especially

for a low-income family.

Most would agree that a world without art would be bleak indeed. So a group of dedicated Monterey Peninsulans banded together in 1998 under the guidance of renowned opera singer Norma Jean Hodges Keyston to form Colleagues of the Arts (COTA). COTA's mis-

sion is: "...to help gifted youth in Monterey County achieve their full potential in the arts by providing needed financial assistance and...resources."

President of the COTA Board, Joan McHenry, says the organization currently gives out about \$30,000 annually, distributed among 36 students this year. Students who show promise in dance, visual arts, music, theater and literature are identified by their teachers and go through an application process that for performing arts candidates includes an audition before the board.

"Our auditions are more like concerts—the kids are so fantastic," McHenry says. "Students see this as a way to move into a very different world than that they came from. These children show great passion and commitment, and they realize: 'This will take me college. I can go to college.' We're helping to nurture the whole person, beyond the talent. We're giving them hope and belief in themselves. Their confidence is astounding."

Eliodoro came from a large single parent family and taught himself to play the piano by hanging around the music room at school. Nurtured by a COTA grant, he is now the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music Artist at CSU, Long Beach and has performed on PBS. In a letter to COTA, he wrote: "You have given wings to my dreams."

*Eliodoro's is just one story of success—there are many more. But success requires funding, and COTA is actively seeking donors. More information can be found at [www.colleaguesofthearts.org](http://www.colleaguesofthearts.org).*

—Michael Chatfield



### Waiting for a Family

**U**rbando is a 15-year-old boy who enjoys reading and listening to music. His extraordinary personality is apparent to all who know him. This teen would like nothing more than to be part of a family.

*Children of all ages and backgrounds are waiting for a home. They need the same love, care and safety your child counts on every day. For more information, please call Kinship Center at 831/455-9965.*