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**The Greenwich Arts Council is awarded \$10,000 grant from
Fairfield County Community Foundation to help fund the expansion of
The Student Docent Program to include Middle Schools**

Knowledge of art and public speaking ability are two of the immediate benefits available to children participating in the Greenwich Arts Council Student Docent Program (part of the GAC's Youth@Art Committee). The Fairfield County Community Foundation has awarded the Greenwich Arts Council a one-year competitive grant in the amount of \$10,000 to help fund this important initiative. The young docents, taken primarily from the New Lebanon School and the Hamilton Avenue Magnet School, will guide their peers through current exhibits in The Bendheim Gallery, telling them about the artists and their works and gaining poise and self-confidence in the process. This year the program will expand to include students from Western Middle School.

The program, now completing its fourth full year, blossomed under the guidance of three Arts Council volunteers, Carol Sarabun, retired principal at Hamilton Avenue School, Lynda James Carroll, an art teacher at Greenwich High School, and Janet Clausi, GAC board member and chair of the Youth@Art Committee. Ms. Carroll was involved with the development of the Aldrich Museum's student docent program, the model on which the GAC's program is based.

With the support of Jeff Spector, coordinator for art and music at the Greenwich Board of Education, the adult volunteers will train the student docents in each school. The students will be brought to The Bendheim Gallery to learn about the works on display and will then guide their own classes, and possibly other groups, on tours of the exhibit. This past year docents led their peers through such major exhibits as *Selective Space: An Intimate Look at the Studio Life of Robert Motherwell*; *Pulling Strings: Art That Moves - The World of Flexitoo*; and *Just Folks*, an international folk art exhibition. Tours in Spanish are available through prior arrangement with GAC curator, Tatiana Mori. When applicable, the GAC

Student Docent Program also provides artist-led workshops geared to the exhibit being toured, and the building of an arts library for the participating schools.

According to GAC executive director, Frank Juliano, "the key component of the Fairfield County Community Foundation grant will be to incorporate this past year's fifth grade docents from Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon, who are now moving on to Western Middle School, to be the trainers of the younger docents, thereby creating a self-perpetuating program that will allow the students to grow in experience as 'trainers of the trainers'."

The Fairfield County Community Foundation promotes the growth of community and regional philanthropy to improve the quality of life throughout Fairfield County. Individuals, families, corporations and organizations can establish charitable funds and contribute to existing funds. The community foundation also provides philanthropic advisory services and develops and leads initiatives to tackle critical community issues. It is in compliance with the Council on Foundations' national standards for community foundations. The Fairfield County Community Foundation merged with the Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation in January 2008. The merged foundation's net assets approach \$150 million. The combined history includes over \$90 million in grant making to nonprofits in Fairfield County and beyond. For more information, visit www.fccfoundation.org.

Students who love art and who are interested in learning more about the docent program are encouraged to call the Greenwich Arts Council office at 203-862-6750 or to check the GAC website at www.greenwichart.org.

The Greenwich Arts Council promotes the arts by nurturing artists and building audiences, bringing the arts to the community and the community to the arts. Now celebrating its 35th anniversary year, the GAC continues to offer programs, services, educational outreach, workshops, special events, gallery exhibitions, concerts, theatre and literary offerings, and affordable studio, meeting, and performance space to the community of Greenwich and the surrounding tri-state area, affecting literally thousands of people each year.