



Little Creators

Fostering Strengths for Living

NPO Little Creators and Art Workshops for Children in Foster Homes

Since 2007, Non-profit Organization Little Creators (LC) has sought to bring art programs (music, performing arts, visual art) to children in foster homes and other harsh living environments so as to give them opportunities for expressing themselves, meeting other people, and enjoying social interaction. By these means, we can help them overcome invisible barriers and foster “aspirations,” “resourcefulness,” and “character strengths” for living in society. While holding various art programs in Japan and abroad since our founding, we have also undertaken workshops regularly, once each month, at a foster home in Kanagawa prefecture since April 2012. The aim of our art program is not to improve children’s art skills or even to create good artworks; rather, because they live in situations where free self-expression is not possible due the pressures of their household environment, we want to give them a place for escaping that harsh environment, however briefly, and joyfully expressing themselves.

Below, I will discuss our five years of workshop activities and the progress we have seen.

About ten elementary school-age children living in foster homes are participating in the LC’s art workshops. In the workshops, the children use household materials to make new creations, such as pinwheels and hats from milk cartons and relief printing plates from cardboard. The children differ in school year and speed of understanding, so in running the workshop, adults (LC staff members) work with the kids nearly one-to-one, sharing their discoveries and answering their questions. The adults watch over the children, give them advice, and try to create an environment where they receive loving attention and feel safe (conditions ordinarily present in a household environment).

As the workshops have gone on, we have seen a clear change in the children’s attitudes. They have stopped monopolizing the tools and started sharing them with others and showing others how to use them. When new children join the workshops each April, along with showing them how to use the paints and brushes, we teach them how to make colors using the three primary colors. After two or three workshops, not only can they make many complex colors, they can also “apply” expressive techniques from previous workshops in creating something else. As this shows, they grow able to express themselves creatively on their own without help. Also, when working in a group, such as when drawing one picture together on a large sheet of (Japanese vellum) paper, they learned how to discuss with each other and make compromises, and they could give their imaginations to the new possibilities that arise when they work as a group. Then, little by little, their powers of concentration grew, and they became able to appreciate each other’s work and give their own impressions. Through their practice of “self-expression through art,” we can say, the children have fostered self-change and acquired the ability to apply what they previously learned.

Although small and simple, the workshops of NPO Little Creators help children living in harsh environments by giving them experiences that foster strengths for living. We will continue to hold workshops and give children support, hereafter.

Kumi Shimokura
Visual Art Program Manager
NPO Little Creators