

# 2011 OUTSTANDING ARTS ORGANIZATION AWARD:

## **The Blackwell Street Center for the Arts**

In 1983, a group of local artists interested in establishing a permanent space in which to exhibit their work founded The Blackwell Street Center for the Arts as a cooperative gallery in Dover, New Jersey. Over the years, the group evolved, becoming a nonprofit corporation in 1989, with the additional aim of providing education and information on fine arts to the public in the form of lectures, seminars, workshops and community programs. In 1996, the Blackwell Street Center for the Arts became an internet “cybergallery” under the web name of “Blackwell St. Artists,” shedding its physical location but remaining dedicated to its mission of exhibiting art, educating the public about art and providing opportunities in the visual arts to the larger community, especially students. Its members continue to mount exhibits at various venues throughout the metropolitan area. In recognition of its work over the years, The Blackwell Street Center for the Arts has received grants from the Dodge Foundation, Casio Corporation and the Arts Council of the Morris Area.

One of this organization’s most outstanding contributions and important legacies in the arts is its annual Blackwell Street Juried Student Exhibit. For the past **23 years**, Blackwell’s dedicated group of professional artists has volunteered the enormous time and energy needed to coordinate this vast undertaking, organizing literally hundreds of submissions from public, private and parochial high school art departments throughout Morris County. Then, over the course of a very intense weekend, Blackwell’s professional artists review and judge 600-800

artworks, select the top 350-400 works for the exhibition and insure that each piece is meticulously labeled with the artists' name, school, medium and title of the work before it is installed at the Atrium Gallery (floors 2-5 of the County Administration & Records Building on Court Street). Ribbons for first, second, third place and honorable mention are awarded to the top works - in every category - and all prizewinning student artists receive individual recognition and, for first place winners, cash awards at the opening reception's award ceremony.

Over the years, the Blackwell Street Juried Student Exhibit has grown enormously in size and scope and developed a reputation as one of the most prestigious exhibits for student artists in New Jersey. Having a work accepted is already a badge of honor. Winning a ribbon is something proudly cited on resumes, college and scholarship applications because judges in the field understand the level of achievement it represents. This unique forum is one of the few opportunities for talented high school artists in Morris County to compete as artists, receive professional assessment, have their works professionally exhibited, and, simultaneously, serve as role models for younger student artists. In addition to the wider public, hundreds of students, their parents, their teachers, their friends and younger art classes with their teachers attend this exhibit each year and come away inspired and renewed by the beauty and talent on display. Think about the sheer volume of work: during the two-plus decades that this exhibit has existed, nearly 15,000 works of art by approximately 1,725 young artists have been selected, juried and professionally exhibited. And, for 23 years, this remarkable event has been a volunteer labor of love by the artists of the Blackwell Street Center for the Arts.

Therefore, for its outstanding work in promoting the visual arts generally and, most specifically, for its remarkable, longstanding dedication and ongoing commitment to young artists through its annual juried student exhibit, the Arts Council of the Morris Area is proud to present the Blackwell Street Center for the Arts with the 2011 Outstanding Arts Organization Award.

NOTE:

We invite Elaine Provost, Secretary of the Blackwell Street Center for the Arts Board, to come up for presentation of the award

May 12, 2011