



# REACHING YOUTH

## ALL IN A DAY'S WORK AT ARTSTECH

**E**xecutive Director Dave Sullivan knows that ArtsTech changes lives. Last year, 4,000 youth spent time at the 1522 Holmes location, learning and honing artistic and technical skills. ArtsTech's mission is to improve lives of underserved urban youth through the development of marketable artistic and technical skills. Sullivan says students have to be enrolled in school to be eligible for any of the ArtsTech programs.

Sullivan says the collaboration of several groups allows ArtsTech to work. In March 1999, Kansas City received a \$630,000 Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, to generate programs to help juvenile offenders. Because the juvenile justice system is a county function, the city directed the funding to the Jackson County Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax Program, and the Sentenced to the Arts Project was born, with COMBAT providing both the day-to-day supervision and administration, as well as the required matching funds. Sentenced to the Arts is going on 10 years, Sullivan says. "We are here to celebrate a private-public effort," he says.

Once students move through Sentenced to the Arts, they can move to Metropolitan Youth Arts and Technology for Students, a program funded and managed by COMBAT. "We have a progression that our students can be involved in where they can start gaining those artistic skills with Sentenced to the Arts and move into

MyARTS. We have the chance to watch skills develop and that development leads to building confidence. It is a wonderful learning cycle. However, it must run parallel with school work and school plans."

The students at ArtsTech are involved in pottery, graphic arts, visual arts, silk screening, photography and some computer rehabilitation. Some students created a hip dental outreach program funded by REACH Healthcare Foundation. "It has been so successful. The funders are pleased with art and technology as the delivery system for this message," Sullivan says. "Art is a vehicle that gives our students a leg up in reading and math. Plus they think about awareness for good oral health and substance abuse."

The MyARTS youth start with a 72-hour unpaid apprenticeship. After this experience, they receive part-time paid positions in the ArtsTech studios, producing work for sale and work commissioned by clients. "We want these students to have skills that may help them realize their dreams after their high school diploma or GED. They need to be more marketable. They gain some entrepreneurial skills and critical thinking. They learn that they are expected to show up which helps create dependable workers. Now more than ever, kids need us."

[www.artstech-kc.org](http://www.artstech-kc.org)