

Girls' visions of skis and skates earn Arts Olympiad honors

BY ALLISON FREEMAN
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Sora Nithikasem, 9, of Livingston, loves the feeling she has when she skis.

"It's exciting when you slide downhill and feel the wind and cool air going down your hair," said Sora, who will be a fourth-grader at Harrison School in September.

Sora created a painting to show how she feels when she's on skis. It shows a young girl flying through the air, her dark hair behind her, as she skis off a mountain in the Netherlands. There is a grassy hill and a valley of tulips.

Andie Wei, 11, of Whippany, created a painting of kids dressed in colorful clothing ice skating on a pond.

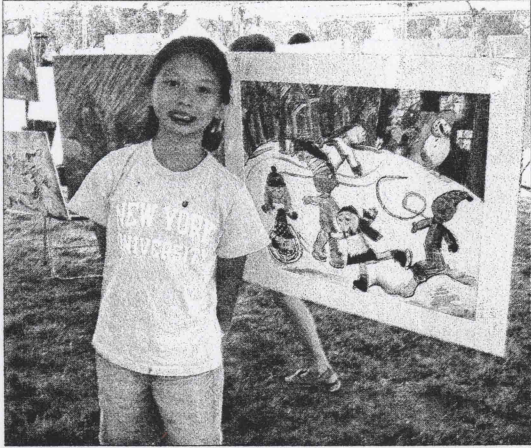
The paintings by Sora and Andie were recognized by the International Child Art Foundation as the New Jersey winners of the 2007 Arts Olympiad. The girls traveled with their families to Washington, D.C., for several days at the end of June to create group art with winners from across the world on the National Mall. They received certificates for their

achievements at an awards ceremony in Virginia.

Ashfaq Ishaq, executive director of the foundation, said he is asking New Jersey's teachers and young artists to begin preparing for the next contest and World Children's Arts Olympiad. Children should create art of their favorite sport on paper measuring 18 by

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young & talented



NANCY YANG

Andie Wei, 11, of Whippany, with her painting of ice skaters, which was featured on the National Mall in Washington.



SURASIT NITHIKASEM

Sora Nithikasem, 9, of Livingston, tried to depict how she feels when skiing in her award-winning painting.

Andie says she enters many art contests and had forgotten about her skating picture because she painted it when she was 9. Then, a couple of months ago, her mother received a phone call saying that she had won the International Child Art Foundation contest.

In Andie's painting, she used bright colors to show skaters on an outdoor pond. "My favorite sport was ice skating when I made this painting, but I don't have time to ice skate anymore," she said. She also enjoys fashion design.

Sora created her painting a year ago, but remembered it vividly since she thinks it is one of the best she has ever made. "I love skiing because there is a lot of excitement when you turn and go down the hill," she said.

Like Andie, Sora enters many art contests. Her painting of cats is in the Baker & Taylor 2007 Cat Calendar.

Sora studies art with professional artist/sculptor Ivan Bratko at Riker Hill Art Park in Livingston. "I enjoy sculpting because it is three-dimensional and you can make it however you want," she said.

Art entries for the new contest can be submitted to ICAF, 1350 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. For information, visit www.icaaf.org.

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24 inches. Entrants must be between the ages of 8 and 12.

"The Arts Olympiad is a four-year program like the Olympics," he said. "The next competition will be announced in 2008 with a lesson plan for teachers, and children can start working on their pictures of their favorite sports."

This past contest attracted 3 million entries from around the world, with 150 winners. "We were very pleased with the entries from New Jersey," Ishaq said. "We were very surprised to receive more entries from New Jersey than from New York."

Ishaq said the program "opens up a new perspective for children as far as the usefulness and the importance of their creative skills. Before they know it, they can create artwork that gets them invited to the World's Children's Festival."

The director said he is trying to arrange an exhibit of the student artwork for the next contest at the 2012 Olympics in London.

Both New Jersey girls said they enjoyed the 2007 Arts Olympiad.

Andie takes art lessons at the Sharron Art Studio in Parsippany. "I like watercolors because that is what I am best at," she said. She will be a sixth-grader at Memorial Junior School in Whippany in the fall.