

Schmidt, Ford share Service to the Arts Award

Alice Nichols named Artist-in-Residence for 1982

By Lorraine McClellan
staff writer

Alice Nichols, an artist with many awards to her credit and a long-time promoter of the arts, has been named Artist-in-Residence for 1982 by Farmington Area Arts Commission.

Jo Schmidt, who teaches art to senior citizens in The Gathering Place, and Shirley Ford, who uses art as therapy for the emotionally disturbed, share the Service to the Arts Award.

The Farmington Art Foundation takes the honors as the organization which has best served the entire community in the past year.

Because members of Farmington Artists Club are all a part of the foundation by virtue of that membership, "All of these artists share in the tribute," said Lois Bro.

Bro served as chairman of the judging committee, which chose the winners from nominations submitted by area residents.

The tribute to those in the performing or exhibiting arts was initiated in 1976 when Farmington Area Arts Commission was established.

Nichols will be given a cash award. Schmidt, Ford and the foundation will receive plaques. The program is made possible by the arts commission in cooperation with Michigan Council for the Arts.

The winners will be guests of honor at a reception 4-6 p.m. Sunday, June 6, in Farmington Community Center, hosted by members of Farmington Arts Commission.

OF ALL THE awards and honors that have come to Nichols because of her artwork, she cites the honor of being named Artist-in-Residence as "very special because it's from Farmington."

She came to Farmington as a student in Farmington High School in 1954. After college she returned to Farmington as a teacher, then raised her family here.

On learning of the award she quipped, "This is a long way from the time I got a group together for a sidewalk and fence show at Farmington High."

Her teaching, her club affiliations, her work in promoting art as something to be enjoyed by those of all ages, whether artist or layman, all was based in Farmington. But much of that

work has since spread beyond the Farmington boundaries.

She is a charter member of Farmington Artists Club, which was initiated as an artist-helping-artist organization. From that she was one of the prime movers to establish the Farmington Art Foundation, the service arm of the club, to bring art for both performing and exhibiting pleasures to those in the community.

Most recently she turned to lecturing, using slides she has taken herself, on a variety of subjects geared for special interest groups, again as an enrichment experience for the layman.

She continues to teach, she said, "Because I want others to know the experience of the creative process."

"I continue to study because each new day brings new excitement."

JO SCHMIDT takes the Service to the Arts Award for the volunteer work she carries on with seniors; work she describes "as pure enjoyment."

That work has always been "helping others appreciate the enjoyment that art can bring," she said. "It can be fulfilling whether you are a professional artist or a hobbyist."

She assisted in setting up the oil painting classes that have been offered to seniors since 1976. She now acts as both teacher and administrator for those classes, funded by Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with Farmington Art Foundation.

She worked to make those classes free of charge for the painters, some of whom reactivated their interest in art through the program, and some of whom took to the lessons as a new experience late in life.

She is also the moving force to get the fruits of those labors displayed in public buildings throughout the area.

She has given painting demonstrations, painting lectures, acted as a guide on Art Train, acted as a guide for school children on museum tours, and served in several capacities for Farmington Artists Club. She is president of the club this season.

Schmidt has received tribute before for "outstanding dedication to the senior adult painting classes."

Of that award she said, "That's where my dedication lies."

SHIRLEY FORD took her art talents to Detroit House of Correction where



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Alice Nichols has been a leading force in the Farmington area's art circles since she spearheaded a sidewalk sale for fellow artists when she was a student at Farmington High School. For her work as an

artist as well as promoter of the arts, she takes the title of Artist-in-Residence for 1982.

'I continue to teach because I want others to know the experience of the creative process. I continue to study because each day brings new excitement.'

— Alice Nicol

she worked as a volunteer with the imprisoned, and then become involved, as a volunteer, with the Harrel Center for young adults in Northville Psychiatric Hospital.

She wasn't there long before that volunteer work turned into a full-time job as an art therapy instructor.

In a letter sent to the judging committee, Dr. Deolarte Pascal writes, "Mrs. Ford has helped transform a paranoid patient to a trusting and friendly person because of her ability to empathize."

In her work in the hospital she is a member of a treatment team for those who are psychotic, paranoid, demanding, negativistic, isolative and dependent.

She uses art to have these patients express interpersonal and interpersonal conflicts, which in turn has enabled the treatment team to better understand the patient.

A long-time Scout leader, lover and preserver of local history, one-time member of Hill and Dale Garden Club and involved in numerous volunteer works, she said, "I don't have time for clubs anymore. The work at the hospital is too important to me. I'll get back to clubs when I retire."

Nor does she find much time for creating artworks for herself these days. Ford cites being commissioned to do portraits of four prominent members

of Detroit Symphony Orchestra "as the most exciting thing that ever happened to me."

But her proudest moment occurred when her portrait of the sorrowing Christ was selected for permanent display in Concordia College in St. Louis.

A copy of this work, called "Father Forgive Them" now hangs in First Presbyterian Church of Farmington.

BECAUSE JO SCHMIDT is president of Farmington Artists Club this year, it is expected she will accept the award on behalf of Farmington Art Foundation during the formal reception for the award winners in June.

From its inception the foundation was intricately involved with Farmington Creative Arts Council, forerunner to Farmington Area Arts Commission. Its first major project, started in

The artist-picture lady is trained extensively in how to lead discussions which stimulate the youth's interest in the art, the artist or the subject at hand.

The Picture Lady Program and the oil painting classes for seniors remain the foundation's two major projects, both of which are operated on a break-even basis, with the club members supplying all the time and a good part of the money.

Much of the money that goes into the foundation comes from a raffle of artwork that is a traditional part of Farmington Artists Club's twice-a-year exhibits.

About a dozen members donate a piece of their original work to be raffled off at the end of each show with all of the proceeds earmarked to support the work of the foundation.



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Jo Schmidt assisted in getting oil-painting classes for area seniors under way in 1976. She is now president of Farmington Artists Club while continuing on as both administrator and teacher for seniors who study painting in The Gathering Place.

'Because members of Farmington Artists Club are all a part of the foundation by virtue of that membership, all of those artists share in the tribute.'

— Lois Bro
Farmington Area Arts Commission
1982 Awards Committee



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Shirley Ford, once a volunteer who used art as therapy for the imprisoned and the emotionally disturbed, now works as an art therapy instructor for young adults in Harrel Center, Northville Psychiatric

Hospital. She believes her art talent is a gift that she has a responsibility to share.