



Reading Eagle: Harold Hoch | Miguel Salvador, 11, left, gets a close look at artwork on display Thursday night at the Reading Recreation Commission's fundraising event "Light Up the Lantern" at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in Reading. With him are Diony DeLeon, 11, center, and Marcus Torres, 10. Student art was up for bid at the annual dinner.

Reading Rec Commission honors artists

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By **Lindsey O'Laughlin**

READING, PA - Avaya Leon has attended the Reading Recreation Commission's after-school program at 11th and Pike streets for two years, and she didn't hesitate to say what her life would be like without it.

"I would be bored all the time," she said. "I wouldn't have a lot of things to do."

Leon, 9, attended the Recreation Commission's third annual "Light Up the Lantern" dinner and awards ceremony Thursday at the DoubleTree at Hilton hotel in Reading, where a piece of her artwork was up for auction with well over 100 other works by students and local artists.

"This gives the community a chance to see (the students') talents and to celebrate them," said Camille Stock, the Recreation commission chief development officer. "When they're sitting at the tables and their piece goes up for auction, you can just see them beaming with pride because it's their moment."

The Recreation Commission is the fruit of a partnership between the City of Reading and the Reading School District to provide after-school programs for students. With two recreation centers,

eight playground locations and several programs, including sports teams, leadership training and cooking classes, the organization has become a staple for the children in the community.

At Thursday's ceremony, it was the art program that took center stage.

"I had to stamp out at least 150 butterflies," said 14-year-old Kayla Russell about her piece. "It actually took me around three days."

Russell, 14, is home-schooled and takes art classes with her teacher, John Huber, at the Third and Spruce center. She brought a mosaic of paper butterflies in the shape of a heart to the event.

"You could just throw something together and call it art, but he (Huber) really expects a lot from you because he knows deep down inside, there is amazing talent," she said.

Both a silent and live auction allowed attendees to buy the works.

A good-natured bidding war broke out between Mayor Wally Scott and Steven Symons over a painted chair and basketball signed by the Reading Red Knights team.

The chair was painted black with the Red Knights logo on the seat. Symons, a representative from GMI First Mechanical Solutions, one of the evening's sponsors, won the bidding at \$1,200.

After the auction, Executive Director Daphne E. Klahr presented the Berks County Community Foundation with the 2016 Community Youth Advocate Award for its support of RRC programs.

Four RRC students - Kayla Russell, Alexandra Bautista, Dereck Pagan and Miguel Salvador - were also honored for their achievements in school and the Recreation Commission programs.

"It's about our future and our children, and keeping people occupied with dreams," Scott said about the event. "I wanted to make it here because our future is these children."

After ticket sales and the art auction, the RRC raised about \$35,000.

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PHOTO GALLERY FROM THE EVENT - Reading Eagle: Jeff Doelp

