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Due to the funding received from Freeport Township, the Freeport Art Museum (FAM) has been enabled to not only sustain the success of the smArt After School initiative, but we have also had the capacity to enhance our collaborations with the Boys and Girls Club (BGC), the YMCA, and the Freeport School District. Through our joint efforts, the program now extends its reach to youngsters in all five elementary schools engaged in the YMCA's School Aged Child Care programs, as well as to youths aged 5-15 participating in BGC programs. The support from Freeport Township has been pivotal in allowing us to introduce the program to the residents of Westview Apartments. Notably, the adolescents involved at this location generally fall within the 13 to 15 age bracket, a group that has proven challenging to engage with in terms of programming. Situated in an area of our community that typically lacks consistent access to artistic and cultural endeavors, we are excited to offer these young individuals top-notch art projects on a weekly basis throughout the school year.

A crucial avenue through which we have fortified the program involves integrating the activities featured in smArt to reinforce the Social Emotional Learning objectives outlined by the Freeport School District. FAM personnel and art instructors actively participate in meetings and training sessions to explore ways in which the art projects facilitate hands-on problem-solving skills, fostering self-assurance, promoting teamwork, and acknowledging personal accomplishments.

-Jessica Modica, Executive Director, Freeport Art Museum.

Having the Freeport Art Museum SmArt program come to our Lincoln- Douglas SACC site after school has been a wonderful addition to our program. Our programs are tailored to children in kindergarten through 4th grades (5-10 years old). The art projects presented are very age appropriate and the eagerness the kids show in learning new styles of art and the joy they find in their completed projects has been inspiring to watch. The youth have been able to learn new art mediums as they create each project. Just as importantly, they had to learn to follow instructions. They also learned that not everyone's art looks the same but that everyone's art is their own creation. We greatly enjoyed Mr. Barry coming and showing our children how much fun art can be! – **Lorie Arendt, Childcare provider with SACC YMCA.**

Students in SmArt After School discover and strengthen their ability to face challenges through working with various media. Often, there are no art supplies available at home, so this is a special opportunity for many to explore high quality art materials. As part of smArt After School, youth find support for their artistic voice in a non-judgmental environment, learning to let go of the harsh inner critic. These young artists exude pride as they show their parents what they did, often asking if they can stay longer. The time spent in the program at the end of the day is valuable for youth to be able to unwind from the school day – smArt staff have witnessed conversations opening up as students work side by side on their art and compliments are exchanged as they recognize something beautiful in their neighbor's work. We often see them relax during this time of making. A very uplifting way to end the school day. – **Barry Treu, Director of Programs and Exhibitions, Freeport Art Museum.**