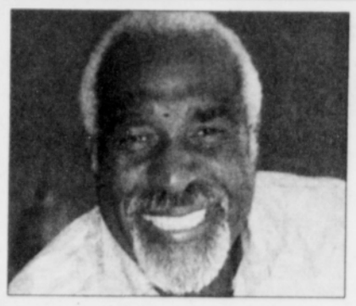

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Art Space Fills Void for Community

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practical career-building skills that will benefit them in the future, like installing art pieces, curating shows, and freelancing in the community.

Bobby Fouther reaches out to the community to collaborate and meet mutual needs of various groups. Students, for example, created props for an African American Health Coalition fair, and the gallery hosted a cast party for the all-African American cast of Oklahoma!

Young people learn in schools, he said, but they are also encouraged to learn traditional knowledge at home from cultural elders within the community, like dance and creative expression.

"We are supporting this process," said Fouther, who grew up under the creative influences of his mother who was a dancer, and his stepfather, a musician.

Open Door Gallery is a traditional art gallery too, open to the public Friday through Sunday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Local and international artists, many African or African-American, feature their artwork in the hallways of McCoy's first floor, including Camaroon natives Kwa Franklin Ghong and Nereus Patrick Cheo, as well as works by local artist Kali Wilson-Hoesch and Bobby Fouther himself.

Another room provides space for a marketplace that local vendors use to promote their crafts; earrings, jewelry, Shea butter, and other artwork, including Liz Fouther-Branch's line of cosmetics and skincare Arbonne.

A painting by Camaroon native Nereus Patrick Cheo is showcased in the new Open Door Gallery.

Workshops, performances, and outdoor festivals are among other functions of the art space. A specialist in dance based on the cultures of the African Diaspora, including West-African, and Afro-Brazilian to the Civil Rights Movement, inspires participants. Bobby Fouther offers a variety of low-cost dance and performance classes.

Twenty percent of all proceeds from art sales go directly to supplies and instructors for art projects in the community. The artwork at Open Door Gallery is impressive and professional, but emphasizes affordability.

On Saturday, Dec. 17, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the McCoy Academy Open Door Gallery will host a holiday fair for the serious gift-giver, featuring paintings, drawings, prints, posters, jewelry, craftwork, notecards, and gifts from Africa.

In celebration of Kwanzaa on Dec. 26, Open Door Gallery will host Siku Kuumba and a day of creativity, which includes an opening of the marketplace at 1 p.m. and performances at 3 p.m.

For more information, call Bobby Fouther at 503-422-3076 or e-mail bobbyfouther@yahoo.com

An acrylic painting on wood and canvas by Kali Wilson-Hoesch of Portland is displayed in the new community art space.

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