



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## MISSION HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT PHILANTHROPIST FOR ARTS EDUCATION Arts Council Santa Cruz County, nonprofit and funder of Arts Education in Santa Cruz County, is the honored recipient.

For many 7th graders, finding something to be passionate about seems like a task to take on when you're much older. It may be hard to balance a budding social life, a diverse curriculum as well as extra curricular activities. But for Jessica Norris, it wasn't.

In fact, she gracefully found a way to intertwine all of her interests. Norris was a student in Kathleen Crocetti's art class at Mission Hill Middle School in Santa Cruz and she stood out from other students. Not only was Norris eager to learn, but she was eager to make a difference in her community.

Crocetti explained to Norris that though Mission Hill has a good art program, there are some students in Santa Cruz that don't have art classes at their schools, usually due to budgeting issues. For many kids, the only way to receive arts education is through after school programs or outside of school. Norris immediately said "that's not right." It affected her so much that she wanted to do something about it, and with the progress she's made thus far, it's clear Jessica really means business.

"Jessica so impresses me," Crocetti said.

Norris turned to SPECTRA teacher Kathleen Crocetti when looking for a way to fundraise, and she encouraged her to raise money for the Arts Council Santa Cruz County. Norris just wants other kids around Santa Cruz to have the same inspiration she does through art.

All of this fundraising took place during Youth Arts Month at Mission Hill Middle School, a time when art education is celebrated in various ways. This year, Norris took it upon herself to curate the Youth Art Month Show, matted and prepared the art, gathered the artists statements, wrote the press release, and essentially put the show on single handedly.

For Jessica, she wasn't done making an impact just yet. For her Bat Mitzvah, she had to do a community service project and for her project, she chose to help her art teacher for Youth Arts Month, and raise money for arts education. She came up with the idea of creating some art cards to raise money to support the arts in education. Norris printed over 100 of them, presented the cards, and invited donations at her Bat Mitzvah luncheon.

**Arts Council Santa Cruz County**

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She initially raised over \$200 and Arts Council continues to receive donations in her honor.

It was important to Norris that she discuss art during her Bat Mitzvah because Tikun Olam is one of her Jewish responsibilities and is about making the world a better place. She wants to do so through her artwork.

Jessica's mother, Rachele Norris is very proud of her daughter for being so ambitious, and for stepping out of her comfort zone.

"It's been huge for her confidence, she's a shy kid," Rachele said. "But being part of Kathleen's class for the past few years has really inspired her."

Jessica Norris is an enthusiastic student who is ardent about art, and is aware of the fact that arts in the public schools happen to be one of the first to go in the schools budget; when she is reminded of this fact, it angers her.

"It makes me angry and it is important to be angry about something that seems blatantly unfair. Think about a poor child in your school district who happens to be a very talented artist," Norris said during a speech at her Bat Mitzvah. "This child should have the chance to take art classes in their school and not have to rely on private art classes or private schools to provide this opportunity. If arts gets cut from the schools, then this child would not have that opportunity to do what they are passionate about."

Arts Council Santa Cruz County is honored to be the recipient of Jessica's philanthropic focus. As one of the largest funder of arts education in Santa Cruz County, Arts Council will ensure these funds support SPECTRA and Mariposa's Art programs and work toward the day when every child in every classroom can experience the arts everyday. It's through philanthropists like Jessica that Arts Council Santa Cruz County can promote, connect, and invest in the arts in order to stimulate creativity and vibrancy in Santa Cruz County.

### **About Arts Council Santa Cruz County**

Arts Council Santa Cruz County's mission is to promote, connect, and invest in the arts in order to stimulate creativity and vibrancy in Santa Cruz County. Through Open Studios, artists connect with their neighbors and art appreciators; through projects like Ebb & Flow River Arts Project, the community comes together to enliven public spaces; through SPECTRA and Mariposa's Art, students experience art in schools; and through the Grants program, critical support is provided to artists and organizations that make our home colorful, vibrant, and extraordinary. Learn more at [artscouncilsc.org](http://artscouncilsc.org).

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