

Artist-in-Residence: A&M Consolidated

By MARY MAERTENS

Janet Eager says she never expected to share an art studio with school children.

She is doing just that as the artist-in-residence for the A&M Consolidated School District.

Sponsored jointly by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Texas Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the program uses the artist as a catalyst to increase the student's understanding of the arts.

"The program gives me a chance to pursue my artistic goals plus make contributions to the community," Eager said.

She explained that she is not a substitute for the teacher who presents objective data about art but is a resource person who provides inspiration rather than instruction.

"I want the kids to enjoy what they're doing," the 24-year-old artist said.

Students at College Hills Elementary School are working on paper-mache and pottery projects.

The largest undertaking has been a painting project by the 5th grade students. The students are painting a mural on 4x8 ft. plywood panels. The finished mural will be displayed in the school cafeteria.

The A&M Consolidated School District is one of eight schools in Texas to have an artist-in-residence

program. Schools must apply to the Texas Commission on the Arts and Humanities in Austin to participate in the program. If chosen, the school signs a contract with the commission on a yearly basis.

Both the school district and the commission contribute \$500 a month to the artist's salary.

While Eager has worked with elementary, mid-high and high school students this fall, she has concentrated on the elementary grades.

"I want to work more with the high school students in the spring," she said.

Eager also works with adults in the community education program.

Eager's studio is located in the special services building on Jersey Street.

An essential part of the program is "for students to see the artist as a professional," said John Paul Batiste, a representative of the commission.

Eager's open studio setting gives students the opportunity to see work she is currently producing.

She said she plans to begin tours for the children next semester so all students in the district will be able to see a working artist.

Eager is shown working on one of her paintings in her studio.

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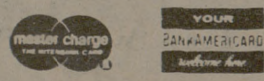
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