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**YOUTH ART GRACES THE WALLS
OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER**

Youth masterpieces showcased

SAN DIEGO – May 22, 2003 – As school districts face decreased budgets and program cutbacks; one local organization continues to offer programs that expand cultural horizons by introducing children to one of the finer things in life – art.

San Diego Promise-Art Link, a project of The Children's Initiative, brings local artists and middle school students together in Critical Hours after-school programs that encourage creation and enjoyment of art.

“Unfortunately, art and cultural learning opportunities are the first to be eliminated with budget cuts, yet they are vital to help our children grow into well-rounded adults,” said Sandra McBrayer CEO of The Children's Initiative and former National Teacher of the Year. “The artists who volunteer their time to the Art Link after-school program teach children about the wealth of art throughout history as well as the value of self expression and creativity.”

Partnering with The Children's Initiative for this exhibit, A Reason to Survive (A.R.T.S.), will present the artwork and essays of children attending after-school programs on Camp Pendleton Marine Base. These works of art were created over the

past two months during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The themes of the paintings and essays are "What hope or courage means to me". ARTS runs an outreach program "Expression Sessions" on base once a week for children whose parents are deployed overseas.

The main hall of the San Diego Administration Center, located at 1600 Pacific Highway, will display youth art the month of June, Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. through 5:00 P.M. The display is open to the public.

The Children's Initiative is a non-profit agency that works to improve the well being of children and youth in San Diego County through strategic alliances with all sectors of the community. The Children's Initiative coordinates and supports after-school programs, juvenile justice initiatives and critical issues projects that impact San Diego children and youth. The Initiative is the leader of San Diego's Promise, the local response to America's Promise, and is working to build an army of volunteers to address the needs of today's youth. Visit www.thechildrensinitiative.org for more information or call (858) 581-5893.

A Reason to Survive is a non-profit agency that provides free art programs to children facing adversity throughout San Diego County. The mission of ARTS is to improve the mental well being and quality of life of children and youth by providing expressive opportunities through the visual and performing arts. For more information on ARTS please visit www.artsurvive.org or call (760) 815-2296.