

Youths' imaginations soar

Teens explore 'space' with N.Y. performance artist at MCC

By **KELLIE DOYLE**
editorial@nwherald.com

CRYSTAL LAKE – Knick Banas weaved through the hallways of McHenry County College, whistling, clapping, snapping, stomping – making noise.

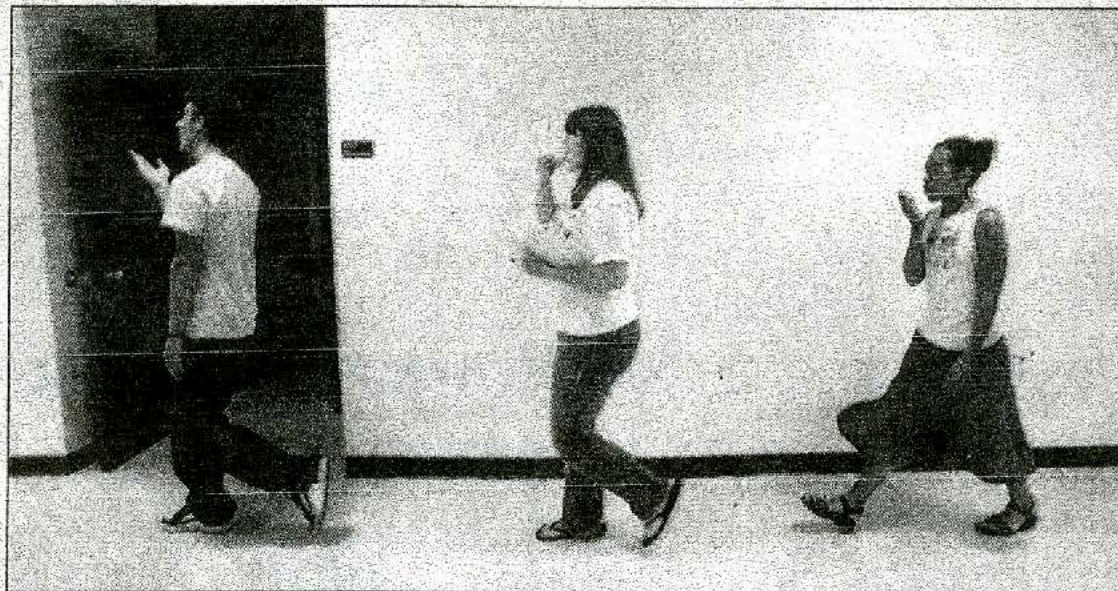
Trailing the 17-year-old from Cary was a group of teenagers. Some mimicked his actions, and others whispered, "Why are we clapping?"

He was leading his followers to an artistic message.

"Why do we feel we have to conform to the building's standards?" he said to the group that now circled him. "... Kick over a chair. Do something different every day."

Banas is one of 39 youth artists involved in this summer's Blue Sky Project, a 4-year-old program that allows teenagers to "intern" in small groups with one of five professional artists from across the globe during an eight-week session.

Every Thursday afternoon, one



Valerie Tobias - vtobias@nwherald.com

Knick Banas (from left), 17, of Cary, Ann Treadwell, 17, of Crystal Lake, and Blue Sky Project program director Maquitta Ahuja make noises with their mouths and hands Thursday afternoon as they walk through a hallway at McHenry County College.

of the groups presents a 30-minute glimpse into its continually evolving piece of contemporary art.

Mandy Morrison, a performance and video artist from New York City, led the first presentation Thursday. She said her group wanted to repre-

sent how the body deals with different structures, such as an "oppressive" classroom, and then answer "What does that look like physically?"

2C

Public is invited to attend group's weekly presentations

• PROJECT

Continued from page 1C

The product: a slide show containing footage of the young artists fitting themselves into unlikely places and positions using desks, chairs, and computer stations. The Blue Sky Project community viewed the slide show in a

classroom in which desks and chairs were knocked over, stacked on top of one another, or hanging on the wall.

"It felt great," Morrison said. "The energy changed."

Mequitta Ahuja, program director for the Blue Sky Project, said she was not surprised by the unique quality of Morrison's presentation; each always is very different from

the last.

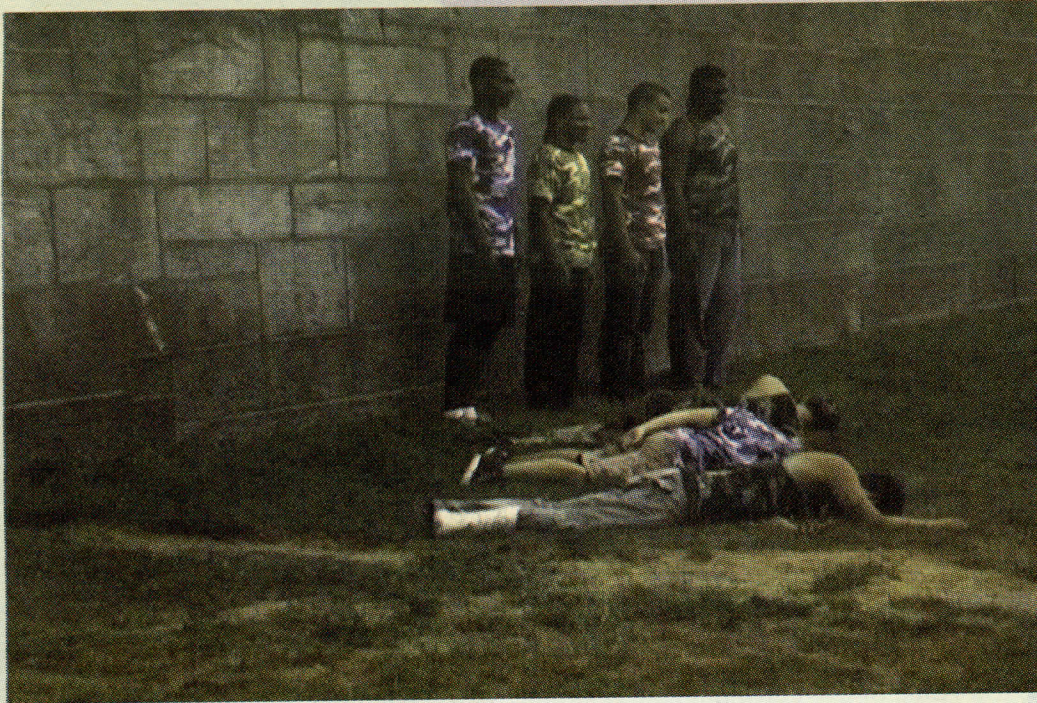
"The kind of experience we can offer is probably unmatched by any other program," Blue Sky Project Executive Director Peter Benkendorf said in reference to the collaborative experience between young and established artists.

Other resident artists include Stephen Auscherman, a video artist and writer from

Albuquerque; Erica Baily, a three-dimensional artist from Columbus, Ohio; Akindiya Rasheed Olaniyi, a sculptor and painter from Accra, Ghana; and the program's first musician, Shaw Pong Liu of Boston, who works with original composition and text.

The public is invited to attend the weekly presentations, which begin at 3 p.m. at MCC.

summerfest 2011



Mandy Morrison & NYC Arts Cypher

Playing Defense is a collaborative performance/video, between Mandy Morrison, an interdisciplinary media artist, and break dance collective, NYC Arts Cypher, a Staten Island organization, which provides dance and graffiti-art facilities to inner-city youth. For this performance, the dancers will perform in front of a video. In the video, they explore and challenge the spatial geometries of a military fortress by pitting the athletic rigor of break dance against the sacrificial and submissive demands of military life.

The project blends the idioms of break dance with contemporary conceptual dance practice, such as those found in the work of Yvonne Rainer and Willi Dorner.

Choreographed by Mandy Morrison. Program Director, Charlie Balducci. Break Dance Participants: Antonio Smith; Tim Diaz; Willifred Finuliar; General Nils aka Slim; Concrete Monkey; B-Boy Earl; Merlin and Anthony Mada.

See them: Bernikow Jewish Community Center Auditorium, 1466 Manor Road

When: Wednesday, June 8, 7-8pm

For the full schedule of Summerfest events:
<http://bitly.com/eYB4IZ>

