

Fairfax High Senior Competes as Budding Filmmaker

BY AMY LYONS

Thurmon Green's artistic talents won him a trip to Miami earlier this month. Almost 8,000 teenagers applied for the prestigious Miami-based YoungARTS Week program, but only 142 of them were selected. Green, a 17-year-old, 12th grade film and video student at Fairfax High School's Magnet Center for Visual Arts, was one of the talented winners.

YoungARTS Week is a program of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA). It brings together some of the most talented teens in the country to study and perform in nine artistic disciplines, including cinemat-

ic arts, dance, jazz, music, photography, theater, and writing. After applying, the young artists are selected by panels of professional artists and flown to Miami, where they participate in an all-

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photo by Amy Lyons

Fairfax High student Thurmon Green was one of only 142 youths selected to participate in the YoungARTS program.

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expense paid week of master classes, showcases and performances. During the week, the teens are mentored by some of the most prominent artists in the country including American Ballet Theatre Executive Director Rachel Moore.

The program has a history of launching careers, with past attendees including actress Vanessa Williams, Broadway/modern dancer Desmond Richardson, and National Book Award-nominee, Allegra Goodman. Green found out in November that he had won a spot in the program. Two months later, he was on a plane to Miami.

"There were five other film finalists and we all worked together," Green said. "During the first day, we

brainstormed, and came up with film ideas. Then, the whole week was about shooting and editing. At night we went to showcases for the other artists."

The showcases in theatre, jazz vocal and dance blew Green away. He said he had never seen such great art and storytelling.

"They were the best of the best," Green said.

According to teacher Alan Warhaftig, who is also co-coordinator of the visual arts magnet program at Fairfax High School, Green is also one of the best. Warhaftig was particularly impressed with one of Green's recent college essays.

"He was asked to write about his world and how it shaped him," Warhaftig said. "And he wrote about The New Beverly Cinema, saying it is a place where people who are interested in culture and films of the past

come together...he is going to be an enormously cultured young gentleman as he grows into adulthood."

Though Green is a talented photographer, Warhaftig said his passion is for filmmaking.

"Thurmon is especially talented as a filmmaker," Warhaftig said. "He made a film called 'Connect' and it is an incredibly sophisticated piece of work. I am amazed at the clarity of his vision."

Green describes "Connect" as a film about teens being disconnected from the people around them as a result of modern technology.

"At the end of it, they have to connect," Green said.

The film was shown last in the screening line-up at youngARTS week and Green is one of 60 participants nominated for the Presidential Scholar of the Arts award. If he is one of the 20 award winners, he will visit

the White House.

"They made it clear that we were all winners," Green said. "But it was nice to be a Presidential Scholar nominee."

In addition to the Presidential Scholar of the Arts nomination, Green, along with the other young artists of the youngARTS Week program, is eligible for prize money.

The Gold Award winners (\$10,000) and Silver Award winners (\$5,000) are eligible for a chance to perform or have their work exhibited in New York City in early May at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. The cash prizewinners have yet to be announced.

Green said his studies at Fairfax Center for Visual Arts, the only visual arts magnet high school in LAUSD, with a limited enrollment of 358 students, helped him decide to pursue filmmaking. He also said

working with the Greenway Court Theatre, another Fairfax High School arts institution, shaped his film studies.

"Being involved in the magnet was helpful because I was introduced to other young people who are interested in art," Green said. "They exposed me to a lot of different art forms...basically, by working with the magnet and Greenway Court I have learned that I want to be a filmmaker."

Green has already begun applying to film schools and hopes to attend California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), or New York University (NYU). He highly recommends the youngARTS week program to other teen artists.

"It gives you a chance to network and see there are other young artists doing what you do," Green said.