

## First Bank of Greenwich Community Corner First Annual Eastern Middle School Art Show

BY RICHARD KAUFMAN

Art has always been a passion for Benjamin Quesnel, an art teacher at Eastern Middle School.

"I have a painting from when I was four years old that I painted at my grandmother's house," Quesnel said. "My father is a carpenter. My mother is good at art. It's in the family for sure."

Quesnel has passed down his love for the arts to his students, and thanks to a relationship with the First Bank of Greenwich, the community can now see that passion on full display.

Quesnel, and fellow art teacher, Stacey Cleary, supervise The Curator's Club at EMS, which was established in 2018 by a group of eighth-grade students.

The club collaborates to lead after-school art socials, curate art exhibitions, and develop advertising and marketing strategies to raise awareness for the arts and the positive change

creative design consultancy that focuses on social, ecological and ethical transformation.

The project, called Meeting at the Waters, was part of the Developing Artist Grant/Program. The grant helps to encourage, develop and inspire future artists by exploring the practices of emerging and established contemporary artists, graduate art programs, their studio environments and organizations that support and develop their careers.

The grant was funded by the Greenwich Alliance for Education and is led by Quesnel and Michael Manning.

The project also received special funding from the Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

FBOG CEO and President, Frank Gaudio, has been a strong supporter of the arts in the community. He also wants to



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**First Bank of Greenwich Assistant Branch Manager Amy Huertas, FBOG CEO and President Frank Gaudio, EMS art teacher Benjamin Quesnel, FBOG Business Development Specialist Anthony Cortese. Seated is Victoria Sirito, co-founder and co-president of the EMS Curator's Club.**

## THE FIRST BANK OF GREENWICH<sup>SM</sup>

that it can provide to schools and the community.

Last month, the club organized its first art show, held at the First Bank of Greenwich.

The student curators developed an exhibition based on environmental art and the projects created by the eighth-grade middle school artists from Central, Eastern, and Western at Tod's Point in collaboration with SPURSE, a Connecticut based

connect to the younger generation in town, so a relationship with Quesnel made perfect sense. Quesnel is on the bank's Advisory Board.

"I take a lot of lead from Ben on advising me on the younger generation. He's been very supportive of the bank and given me a lot of information that I use to do different events," Gaudio said. "It really helps the bank to get more

involved not just with one group of people. We have a really eclectic group of people on the Advisory Board, and I want to keep that."

Quesnel said the bank has been a good supporter of his over the last five years.

"When you walk into the bank, it's like you're walking into a group of friends. Everyone is so accommodating and they're at every event in town. I'm obviously into the arts, and I always see someone from the First Bank of Greenwich supporting the arts at those events," Quesnel said.

Quesnel added that the FBOG has supported his artistic endeavors outside of EMS. Quesnel was part of a project and team of 22

artists that artistically transformed a house in Greenwich before it was demolished last October.

"Those are the types of events they support, which is unusual for a bank to jump in and do something like that," Quesnel said.

The Curator's Club is slated to expand to Central and Western Middle School this month. Quesnel said he enjoys working with the club and his students every day.

"They keep my energy up. They're inspiring. I try to create a positive energy and attitude in the classroom. They give it right back. I'm happy waking up every morning and coming in," he said.

The art show at FBOG will be on display through the end of April.