Their hopes, their dreams on display

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Recommended Citation
Dickerman, Andrew, "Their hopes, their dreams on display" (2004). Rhode Island Training School. 28.
https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/rits/28
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PROVIDENCE — The brightly colored artwork on display at CityArts for Youth gallery on Broad Street comes from an unlikely source — young people incarcerated at the Rhode Island Training School.

The work was selected by Marie Popko and Meghan MacNeil, AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers who work 40 hours a week teaching art to the youngsters.

The two women are only slightly older than their students, but they have dedication and enthusiasm beyond their years and are effusive in praising their pupils.

The largest object in the show is a collage of bottle caps and discarded objects that have been transformed into a beautifully executed image with a Harlem jazz theme.

A torso with its arms raised is a meaningful work, especially because of the original poetry inscribed on it, echoing the mistakes and hopes of the artist.

"It's rising from violence, confusion, addiction," Popko said, explaining that the indecipherable words at the bottom become clearer as they reach the top.

The message is a carefully crafted statement by Greg A., describing a thirst for learning, with a picture attached that shows the artist from the neck down. None of the authors or artists is fully identified, but their intelligence and insight are visible.

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