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## FEATURE: JANUARY 2011

### Reaching for the Arts

#### A scholarship program fuels education after high school

Story by Bill Romaneli | Photo by Anne Chadwick Williams



*Advocates for the Arts recently awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Solano resident Sean Patrick Shadduck.*

For most of his life, Sean Patrick Shadduck had heard — and believed — that hard work yields rewards. When he proved that to himself earlier this year, it was a boost to his self-confidence.

Shadduck, age 18, is one of three students who were recently awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from Advocates for the Arts, a nonprofit formed in 1993 to support the visual and performing arts in Solano County. AFTA provides these scholarships each year exclusively to students involved in arts studies.

"I grew up in an artistic home, and I've always had a passion for the arts," he says. "By my junior year of high school I was heavily into art, and I was starting to think I wanted to make a career out of it,

but didn't know if I really could."

But he kept at it, producing great volumes of art, and someone noticed. Shadduck paints with acrylics and dabbles in computer graphics.

A teacher entered one of his pieces into a city art show, and it took first place. That same piece later won third place at the Solano County Art Show. Those wins gave him all the encouragement he needed to apply for the AFTA grant in February and, more important, to believe he had a shot at it. When he learned he'd won, he knew he was on the right track.

"It was definitely a sign that it might be a good idea to stick with this art thing," Shadduck says. "It was very motivating."

That reaction is exactly what AFTA's leaders are hoping to inspire.

"We've got to educate kids in the arts if we want to keep the arts going," says Zach Powell, AFTA's president. "Arts play an important role in shaping communities. Whenever we have young people interested in pursuing the arts, we want to help them as much as we can."

AFTA raises money through memberships and an annual "Evening in the Valley" fundraiser. With no overhead or staff to pay, every penny goes right back into the community to support the arts. In a good year, AFTA contributes upward of \$50,000 to local artists and programs.

Shadduck has put his AFTA scholarship to good use in working toward his GED at Solano Community College. He'll enroll in a series of art classes next year and hopes to transfer to UC Davis or UC Santa Barbara the following year. Ultimately, he'd like to open his own gallery and produce his own work, or at the very least land a dream job with Pixar or LucasArts. Wherever he ends up, he plans to give something back in turn.

"I feel like it's my moral responsibility to return the favor to someone else," Shadduck says. "It was the generosity and love of the arts by others that has helped me get where I am. When I'm able, I want to help someone else get where they want to be."