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A world united by the young Cable show host offers kids international forum

Kreative kids

By Melissa McKeon
CORRESPONDENT

WORCESTER — Ten-year-old Xinyan of China is a lot like other 10-year-olds the world over. She loves her stuffed animals and has her favorite subjects in school (art, calligraphy) and the ones she dislikes (physical education),



and she dislikes having too much homework.

But Xinyan will soon join a growing group of children whose voices, if

Worcester's Virginia Swain has her way, will reach across the world on all sorts of topics.

Ms. Swain, the host of the WCCA-TV 13 cable show "Imagine Worcester and the World," will be giving children the world over the chance to participate in the show and give their opinions on subjects most of us hear about only from the so-

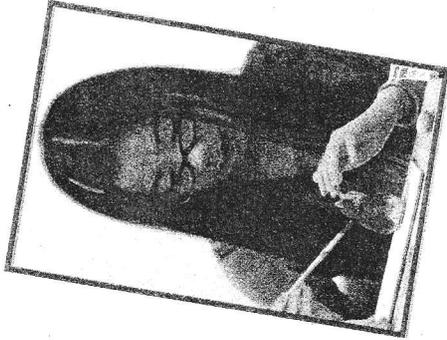
Turn to 'Imagine' /Page 7

INSIDE

Coming Up
PAGES 2, 4

VIEW Cartoon
PAGE 5

Continued



During holiday vacation from school, talent was at play at the Worcester Art Museum's art workshops for children ages 3 to 13, which included a visit to the museum's galleries and instruction from professional artists and educators.

Working on various art projects are, from left, Max Freshman, 7, of Northboro; Natalia Branca, 5, of Shrewsbury; Ethan Freshman of Northboro; and Anna Pyche, 11, of Auburn.



JOHN FERRARONE PHOTOS

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'Imagine'

'Imagine'/From Page One

called experts.
 "For a couple of years now, I've been feeling that they're missing from the public discourse," Ms. Swain said.

Ms. Swain's idea to make children part of her show probably has its roots in Ms. Swain's past experience, teaching children while in the Peace Corps in Liberia. She taught fourth- and sixth-graders and later taught kindergartners.

In recent years, Ms. Swain has worked with the United Nations and has championed world peace causes through the U.N. while operating her own mediation and reconciliation service in Worcester. Hosting her local cable show gives her a forum.

It's not the first time she's given children a chance to air their unique viewpoints, either.

Several years ago, Ms. Swain produced a show with Nelson Place School third-graders discussing climate change with former U.N. Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury and his wife.

The students heard about climate change from experts, created images of what climate change did and how it could be changed, and created action plans for the future.

Their imaginings — and the energy they put into it — were powerful, Ms. Swain recalled.

"They were graphing their electric bills, they started to think about doing more bike riding instead of driving, all these paradigm shifts," she said. "Naturally they affected their families."

That experience gave Ms. Swain a template for what she'll be doing with children on "Imagine Worcester" in the next few weeks: using those young imaginations to open a new vision of the world to her audience.

When the children in the Nelson Place School program brought the ideas they brainstormed home to their parents, they changed their own little piece of the world.

Something else Ms. Swain hopes will change is having children speak without the prompting from adults and let their



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ten-year-old Xinyan of China will be participating in cable TV show host Virginia Swain's children's program, "Imagine Worcester and the World."

original, unedited ideas find an audience.

In Ms. Swain, they'll find a receptive audience.

"I don't have the need for the kids to adopt my view," she said. "My need is to allow them a voice."

Ms. Swain plans the program to highlight children older than 7 and to also have a forum for the children who are shy and less able to speak in public. For those children, she plans an imaging project in which the artwork they produce will speak for them.

Paramount for Ms. Swain and foremost in the concerns of many parents is that the children in the program find a safe place, and a safe way to express themselves, in a world that hasn't always been successful at protecting them. The privacy of the children in the shows will be protected.

The first children's show will be broadcast in February, Ms. Swain said, and will be accessible to all, not just on Channel 13 in Worcester but also online at www.wccatv.com.

What can be gained by listening to children talk? Ms. Swain hopes it will help foster some intergenerational understanding and discussion, but in a way, it's the children who will be setting the goals here.

For Xinyan, the goal is simple: "If we can talk more, countries will be closer."

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Area hospice service seeks volunteers

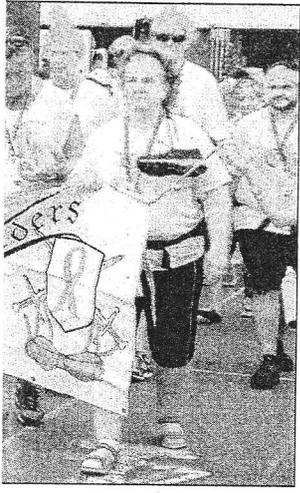
Affinity Hospice of Life, serving Auburn, Fitchburg, Holden, Spencer, Westboro and Worcester, is offering volunteer training to the local community.

The free, comprehensive 12-hour training program will prepare individuals on how to assist patients on their end-of-life journey. Training can be adapted to fit your schedule.

For more information, call (888) 239-0401 or email Marianne_bourgault@LCCA.com.

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Leominster (left, with pink hair), Bradford, both of Leominster, wish line at last year's Susan G. Massachusetts at Boston.

2 to go Rink

to us to support that," she

ie of the other 3-Day Walks ps that has partnered with Cup Crusaders to help sell ts is "Breast Intentions," a p based in Clinton that, ng recently obtained)(3) status, has been work- o make a difference in the of local women undergoing ment.

That is great about that p is that they are able to tell exactly where the money they raise goes," Ms. usso said. "They can say, we four mortgage payments covered 17 prescriptions paid whatever amount in y bills. For some people, good for them to know ily how their dollars are ng."

e most important thing for d-be Feb. 2 Sharks game at- es to know is that, in order heir support to reach the Crusaders, tickets must be nased through Ms. DiRusso alling (978) 537-4720 or ling Kathy@cupcrusader-1. llk-in ticket sales can also ccommodated at her office Park St., second floor, Leo- ter.