

# **Abracadabra! Abrakadoodle turns kids into artists**

Pat Lakatta has always been independent, self-motivated and purpose-driven. So starting an Abrakadoodle franchise three years ago seemed like the perfect professional move for her.

One of 70 around the country, Mrs. Lakatta has taken the art program into a handful of Catholic elementary schools in the archdiocese, plus more than 30 other client sites.

After receiving the “green light” from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Mrs. Lakatta approached Catholic schools and was welcomed by St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School, Hampden; Holy Family School, Randallstown; Father Charles Hall Catholic School (middle), Baltimore; and the St. Francis Xavier Head Start Center, Baltimore. Her franchise currently serves 780 students, supplementing schools’ existing (and non-existent) art teachers, programs and after-school programs – on-site.

“I just love children,” said the parishioner of Church of the Nativity, Timonium. “This was a natural thing for me.”

After reviewing the art education program, Janis M. Peck, director of Catholic schools marketing and institutional advancement for the archdiocese, enthusiastically endorses Abrakadoodle’s integrated and enrichment programs, and she recommends it to private and parochial schools in the archdiocese.

“From an administrative perspective,” she wrote in a letter to Mrs. Lakatta, “Abrakadoodle programs are well organized, developmentally appropriate and articulated by trained teachers through concise, well-thought-out lesson plans.”

With 12 teachers, all of whom have STAND training, in her Abrakadoodle program, Mrs. Lakatta – as executive director – oversees the curriculum of art classes that includes mixed media: paints, pastels, collages, origami, modeling compounds, and other creative tools and materials. Youngsters also learn about contemporary and master artists, and develop art vocabulary.

“We do stuff parents don’t like to,” she said in her colorful studio housed in Brown Memorial Church, Baltimore, where Abrakadoodle also offers birthday parties, field trips, summer art camps, home-school classes, and special events.

Without a budget for an art program or the staff to teach it at Archbishop Borders School, Abrakadoodle works well in the Baltimore school.

“Abrakadoodle is an outstanding program. It has brought out the creativity of each child,” said Cathy Marshall, principal. “It isn’t about the perfection of a completed piece of art; it is about the creativity of each individual. We have beautiful displays of all the students’ work around the school giving us cause to celebrate so many gifts.”

No two turkeys look the same in any Abrakadoodle art class, said Mrs. Lakatta. When children are given the opportunity to interpret, they become self-reliant and, in turn, more trusting.

“I love Abrakadoodle,” said the Wilkes-Barre, Pa., native. “I think what we have is a remarkable service. We offer access to everyone.”

Pat Lakatta welcomes the opportunity to visit your school to explain the Abrakadoodle art program. Call her at 410-561-9220 or e-mail [plakatta@abrakadoodle.com](mailto:plakatta@abrakadoodle.com).