

Interview with Benjamin Rieke, 2007 Multi-Media Youth Arts Award Winner

**1) What is the story behind your piece of art, and what inspired you?**

My art teacher, Mr. Friggle, really wanted me to participate in this contest through CCHD, so I began to do some research over the internet. I saw hundreds of images of people around the world who were starving and didn't have adequate shelter. Men, women, children, black, white, Christian, it didn't seem to matter; poverty wasn't biased. It preys on the weakest and less fortunate people of the world. Seeing all of these people struggling to survive, I felt like I had to at least try and make a difference. I originally began to paint a whole array of various scenes of people living in poverty. Unhappy with the way this painting looked, I stopped and began to think of a new idea. While I was painting and thinking, I was also listening The Beatles, and the song that was playing was called "Carry That Weight." The words in the chorus are "Boy, you're going to carry that weight." Upon hearing these words, my thoughts instantly shifted towards thinking about poverty as a weight on someone, and I came up with the idea of a guy collapsing under the weight of poverty or really just the weight of the world for anyone. After talking with my art teacher, we decided the painting was too depressing just having a guy struggling under this weight, so we decided it would be best to digitally add a heavenly figure reaching out and helping this man bear the weight of poverty or the weight of the world.

**2) What did you learn about poverty and CCHD through the contest and the process of creating your work of art?**

I was shocked at first; I've seen pictures and heard about poverty in third world countries, but I didn't realize how large of a problem it was in the wealthiest country in the world. Too many people in this country can't afford food, shelter, or healthcare. There is a hope. CCHD and other similar organizations are tirelessly working to end this problem in America by helping and teaching people around the country that with enough effort and support anyone can overcome poverty.

**3) What message do you hope your art portrays?**

I hope this piece of art will open the eyes of everyone the very real and large problem our country has with poverty. We need to come together and help the least of humanity in what ever way we can. We are all equal...We are all human...We all deserve the same basic right...The right to life...The right to food, adequate shelter, and healthcare...