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**Teens Exhibit Many Talents During Chicago Artists Month
Teen Artists Tour demonstrates innovative After School Matters
apprenticeships**

As a teenager, Karolina Kowalczyk (photo attached) refused to flip burgers, and an After School Matters (ASM) apprenticeship meant she didn't have to. "I didn't want my first job to be at a fast food place," Karolina says. "I wanted experience. I wanted something that I was excited about—something related to the arts."

Karolina features her most recent paintings in an exhibit called "Pepto", at the Teen Artists Tour, on Wednesday, October 18, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM, at the Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, 66 E. Randolph St. Part of Chicago Artists Month, the Teen Artists Tour also includes guided tours of the center; music, dance, and poetry performances; and interactive painting, photography, and culinary arts demonstrations by local teens.

Beginning in 2003, Karolina participated in various ASM apprenticeships, hands-on, interactive programs led by skilled professionals, including cane carving and, eventually, painting. She was immediately impressed by her instructors' expertise and excited to be working with notable artists in the Chicago community. "I loved the trust of my instructors. They always told me to run with my ideas, and I liked that," she explains.

ASM apprenticeships help teens develop marketable skills that have value in the workplace, such as teamwork and problem solving. Karolina quickly discovered that her love of painting translated to viable education and career opportunities. Today, she attends the American Academy of Art and creates commissioned artwork for organizations throughout Chicago. She intends to become a professional illustrator and has already begun her own online postcard business.

ASM has helped Karolina do much more than avoid a summer of burger-flipping—she's devised a clear plan for career success.

After School Matters is a non-profit organization that expands out-of-school opportunities for Chicago teens. Apprentices receive a stipend for their work, and attendance is required. Teens apply online and interview for the apprenticeships just as they would if they were interviewing for a job. Current programs focus on the arts, sports, technology, communications, and science. For more information, please visit www.afterschoolmatters.org. To view additional images from Karolina's portfolio, please visit www.karolinaart.com.

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