The Seattle Times

Corona Multimedia Showcase seeks to display kids' creative projects made during the pandemic

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These are some of the submissions already received for the Corona Multimedia Showcase, which seeks to display creative works by children... (John Engerman / Corona Multimedia Showcase) **More** \checkmark

By Gemma Alexander

Special to The Seattle Times

Challenging times have inspired many artists to create their best work. The Corona Multimedia Showcase is demonstrating that this is as true for children as it is for professional artists.

"We want to encourage children that their thoughts, feelings and their ideas are really important to us in the adult world," said Marilyn Cohen, executive director for Action for Media Education (AME).

AME, a Seattle-based nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting media literacy, established the Corona Multimedia Showcase to encourage children and their families to develop creative projects that reflect their lives during the pandemic. The international showcase is a free, noncompetitive platform for youth to share their pandemic-inspired projects — which can take the form of video, photography, written word, arts and crafts, music and dance and tech innovations — with the world. It will take place entirely online.

1 of 3 7/13/2020, 12:28 PM

"We came up with the idea shortly after the lockdown was declared and children were suddenly thrust into a different world. Children no longer had the routines they were used to. The schools were closed and there was a lot of unstructured time when they couldn't do their normal activities," said Cohen.

AME, together with its partners, the University of Washington's Northwest Center for Excellence in Media Literacy (of which Cohen is the director), Child Rights in Action, and the International Janusz Korczak Association, saw an opportunity in this vacuum to encourage children to engage in creative activities. AME put out a call for entries on the website coronashowcase.org (which has information in multiple languages).

Children ages 3-19 and their families have until Oct. 9 to submit their creations on the project website. There is no entry fee. An adult is required to complete the submission form. All submissions will be shared on the showcase website during Media Literacy Week, which begins Oct. 26. The showcase will be organized by age group and medium and will remain online indefinitely.

"The project is really a celebration of creativity of children around the world and to have them share across borders during this historic time," says Cohen.

National coordinators are being recruited to promote the showcase in their respective countries. So far, coordinators from 45 countries have joined the effort.

"It's not a competition, it's a festival, and we want to support everyone who submits something they consider their best work," said Cohen. "For this project we encourage children to use whatever their favorite medium might be. The choices are very broad and are limited only by the imagination."

However, if ideas are in short supply, age-based creative prompts on the website can be used as catalysts to get started and AME is sharing selected submissions on its social media channels to illustrate the variety of possible projects.

The showcase has already received submissions as varied as a Ukrainian toddler's drawing; a Washington state family's short film, "When Corona Hits Legotown" (complete with toilet-paper hoarding); and a Russian teen's piano performance of Chopin's Nocturne No. 20.

"The creative projects that children produce are of interest and should have impact everywhere. Their voices need to be heard. I think it's fascinating for everyone to look

2 of 3 7/13/2020, 12:28 PM

at and consider what the voices of children are telling us," said Cohen.

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3 of 3 7/13/2020, 12:28 PM