

# Going for Gold

Children around the world compete for the most prestigious award of all: world peace.

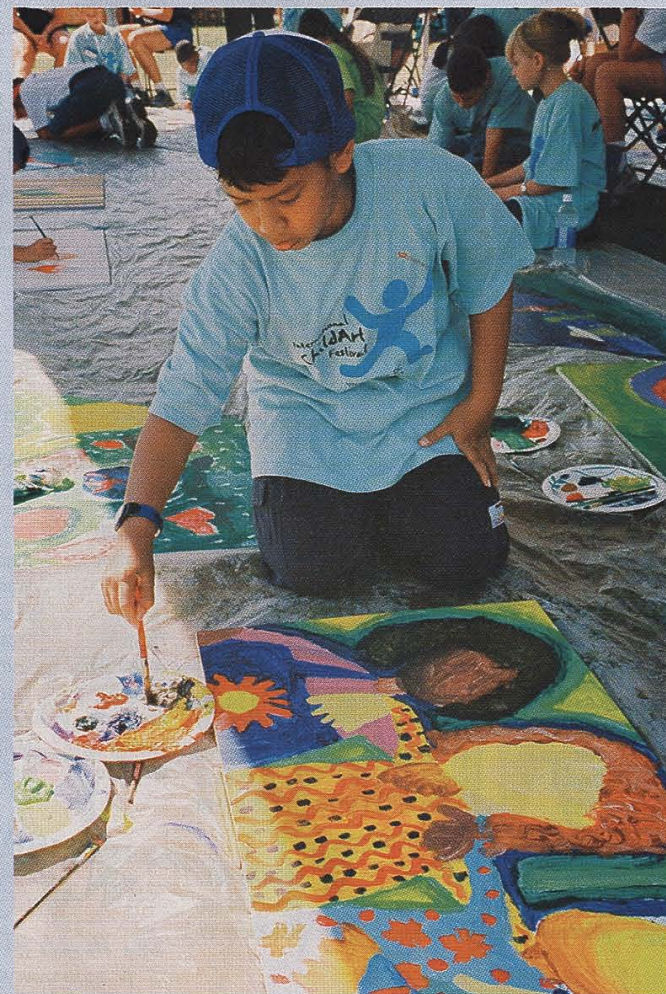
This past summer, fans across the globe turned on their televisions, skimmed their area newspapers and listened to their local radio stations with rapt attention to discover how their favorite athletes fared during the 2004 Olympic Games. Medals were awarded, the fanfare faded and teams returned

home. Almost as soon as they'd begun, it seemed, the games had ended. But for educator Ashfaq Ishaq, the real olympics haven't even begun. His unique competition, the Arts Olympiad, is scheduled for 2007, and more than 1 million children are waiting in eager anticipation for their chance to compete.

The project began after Ishaq felt called to found The International Child Art Foundation (ICAF). The educator's vision was to create a global program that encouraged children to participate in the arts, promote peace and meet other young artists from around the world. "The idea is that young people would meet others their age from around the world, using art as a common language," explains Jennifer Adams, education technology manager for the ICAF. "And then later, when they heard negative things about other countries on the news, they'd remember the people from those countries that they'd met and put a positive face to that culture."

More than 80 countries now participate in the Arts Olympiad, with the goal to expand the reach to more than 100 countries. Participating countries and every state within the United States hold their own local competitions, and the winner of each state and country is honored in a national festival. Finalists, along with their parents and art teachers, are then invited to attend an international festival in Washington, D.C., to compete for top awards. During the festival, there are activities and performances, and a celebrity artist helps finalists paint a life-size mural. For the last festival, artist and author George Rodrigue helped children create *The Art for Peace Pyramid*. "There are many artists who work with us," says Ishaq. "I don't think we'll have any trouble finding a famous artist who wants the opportunity to create art with these brilliant young artists from around the world."

In addition to the Arts Olympiad, ICAF also hosts outreach



### Artistic prodigy

An Arts Olympiad finalist shows off his artistic talent during the mural painting event (at right). Artist George Rodrigue works with one of the participants to create *The Art for Peace Pyramid* (below).



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programs, which provide art opportunities to children across the globe, and a Peace Through Art program to encourage international friendships through the arts. The nonprofit group also publishes *ChildArt Magazine*, an ad-free periodical that teaches children about the arts. To find out how you can volunteer to make the world better and safer through art, contact: The International Child Art Foundation, 1350 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Tel: 202/530-1000. Web site: [www.icafo.org](http://www.icafo.org)

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