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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ANNUAL STUDENT ART EXHIBITION RETURNS TO SAMA

Loretto – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art will continue its tradition of celebrating the area’s talented young artists with the return of *Artists of the 21st Century*, the Museum’s twenty-first annual student art exhibition. More than 250 student-created works will be featured in the dual exhibition. *Artists of the 21st Century* will be on view at SAMA-Loretto from February 1 through March 23 and at SAMA-Ligonier Valley from February 15 through April 21.

Held in conjunction with National Youth Art Month, the exhibition is open to schools that participate in SAMA’s Arts-in-Education or Artist-in-Residence program. Through the programs, SAMA educators and professional artists travel to public and parochial schools to provide lessons designed to enhance students’ understanding of art creation, technique, history, criticism and aesthetics. SAMA’s award-winning education initiative is the largest of its kind in the Commonwealth.

Ten districts and 24 schools are participating in this year’s exhibition. Each district is permitted to submit up to 25 individual projects and two group projects. Schools in Bedford, Blair, Cambria and Somerset counties will be exhibited at SAMA-Loretto, while schools in Fayette and Westmoreland counties will be featured in the Ligonier Valley exhibition.

Each museum will hold an opening reception to celebrate the exhibition and the region’s student artists. The SAMA-Loretto reception will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, February 9. SAMA-Ligonier Valley’s reception is scheduled for 1 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 3. Please note that parking for the Ligonier Valley reception is available at Fort Ligonier only, with free shuttles running to and from the Museum. The receptions are open to the public free of charge, but the Museum suggests a donation of \$1 per person in support of the exhibition.

As part of its student art celebration, SAMA-Loretto will host the inaugural *Mardi Gras for a Cause* family program on Tuesday, March 5. The event will take place from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and will include family-themed entertainment that highlights the Museum’s teaching artists. Storyteller Jan Kinney will dazzle guests with her incredible tales, while other artists will offer demonstrations and hands-on projects. Guests also will have an opportunity to bid on artwork from SAMA’s teaching artists through a silent auction. Cost is \$25 per family, which includes snacks and drinks. Reservations are requested by March 1 by calling (814) 472-3920.

“Please take the opportunity to visit these exhibitions and view the wonderful student art on display,” said SAMA Education Coordinator Jessica Campbell. “You’ll see faces beaming with joy, proud parents and some truly amazing artwork. I urge everyone to see what arts programming is happening in our local schools and to support your local district and their art program. SAMA is grateful for all the community support this exhibition receives, as well as for the schools that place an emphasis on the arts and for the teachers who have such dedication to their students. Most of all, please join us in acknowledging our area students for their incredible imagination and creativity.”

Schools represented in the Loretto exhibition include: Altoona Area High School; Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School; Cambria Heights Elementary School; Forest Hills Elementary and Junior-Senior High schools; Greater Johnstown Elementary School; Penn Cambria Primary, Intermediate, Middle and High schools; Portage Area Elementary School; and St. Michael School.

Schools participating in the SAMA-Ligonier Valley exhibition include: Baggaley Elementary School; Fort Allen Elementary School; Greater Latrobe Junior and Senior High schools; Hempfield Area Senior High School; Latrobe Elementary School; Ligonier Valley High School; Laurel Valley Elementary School; Maxwell Elementary School; Mountain View Elementary School; R.K. Mellon Elementary School; Stanwood Elementary School; West Hempfield Elementary School; and West Point Elementary School.

SAMA’s museums in Ligonier Valley and Loretto are open to the public free of charge. Hours of operation at SAMA-Ligonier Valley are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. weekends. SAMA-Loretto’s operating hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturdays. For more information, visit www.sama-art.org or contact Jessica Campbell, Education Coordinator, at (814) 472-3920 or jcampbell@sama-art.org. *Artists of the 21st Century* is sponsored in part by WJAC-TV.

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