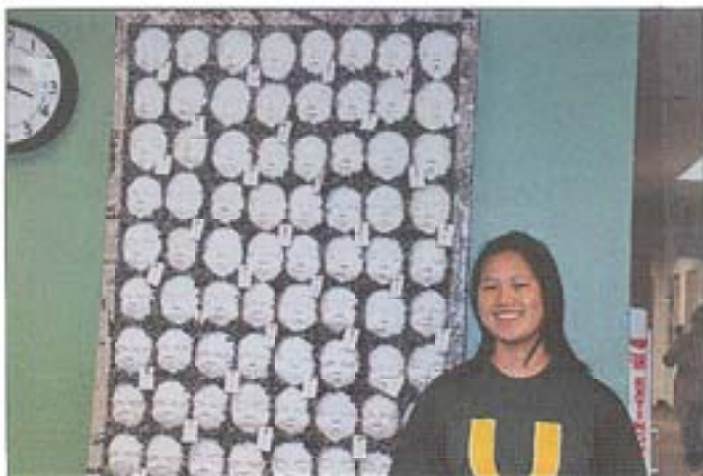




DAVIE



UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NOVA

'AN INCREDIBLE ARTIST': Grace Chiang, 17, a senior at University School of Nova Southeastern University, will be honored at Carnegie Hall for her sculpture.

Teen artist to be honored

■ A high school student who created a 3-D tribute to the victims of last year's Chinese earthquake will be recognized at Carnegie Hall next month.

BY SHANNON PEASE
Special to The Miami Herald

Cast in white porcelain, angelic, childlike faces emerge from the surface of Grace Chiang's sculpture called Szechuan Province: May 22, 2008.

The work is a tribute to the tens of thousands of lives lost in last year's earthquake in China. Among the victims were many children, who died when their schoolhouses collapsed around them.

"Elementary schools were destroyed. Kids were trapped," said Grace, 17, of the catastrophe. "My artwork is to commemorate those who were involved in that."

Grace, a senior at University School of Nova Southeastern University in Davie, recently received a gold medal for her mixed-media

work from The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, an 86-year-old national program that recognizes outstanding creative teenagers. The award puts her in the ranks of previous recipients who include Robert Redford, Andy Warhol and Truman Capote.

Grace, who lives in Davie, will be honored for her sculpture, which is a mixture of porcelain clay, Chinese newspaper and silk thread, at a celebration June 4 at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Her artwork will also be recognized with top honors at the World Monuments Fund Gallery in the Prince George Hotel in Manhattan.

Grace said she was "shocked and surprised" when she learned she had won a gold medal.

"She's an incredible artist and perfectionist," said her art teacher, Melanie Cohen.

The sculpture took two months to create in Cohen's class after the teacher assigned each student to memorialize or pay tribute to

something. Grace, a Florida native whose family arrived from Taiwan, said she chose the Chinese earthquake because she thought it was important for everyone to remember it.

Each of the 72 faces, some bearing body tags, in Chiang's 3-D cultural piece symbolizes the people who died. The rolled-up Chinese newspaper represents the destruction and debris left by the earthquake. She picked baby faces, she said, "because they are innocent."

Out of 140,000 artist submissions nationwide, Grace's was one of 10,000 honored as a regional Gold Key winner and one of 1,000 to earn a national award.

"Some of the past winners are some of the most famous names in art and writing," said Cohen, who will travel to New York with Grace and her family in June.

After graduation, Grace plans to major in 3-D animation at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey.