

# ARTS



## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Connect . Visualize . Explore

A collage of musical instruments including a trumpet, bass, guitar, and drums, rendered in black outlines on a yellow background with a scalloped edge. The collage is set against a dark purple background with some white scribbles.

# Guidebook

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“ON HER SHOULDERS ARTS CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS”  
is trade name of visual artist, poet and arts educator Annie Ruth.

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ON HER  
SHOULDERS™



# Introduction

In 2020 - 2021 I created an exhibit called “On Her Shoulders” to share the heart and soul of Black women—and how we have always had to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. It was also a way for me to process the deluge of racial trauma that saturated our world during onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine of our nation. The exhibit debuted at the Cincinnati Museum Center in July 2021 and would later inspire this unique Arts Curriculum.

Art is the universal language that helps us view the world more clearly. Annie Ruth’s newest arts curriculum is an extension of her 16 painting series *On Her Shoulders*, which explores the struggles and triumphs of Black women. The *On Her Shoulders Arts Curriculum* is an education curriculum that cultivates critical thinking and interpretation of the visual arts. It is suitable for all ages, but is most impactful for students in middle school up through adulthood. Ruth’s goal is to cultivate cross-cultural and multi-generational story sharing that promotes health, wellness, healing, and greater understanding and appreciation of differences.

Through this engaging and inspirational arts curriculum set, Annie Ruth demonstrates how visual art imparts life-changing lessons. Annie Ruth uses bright and bold colors to draw viewers into art to see beyond the surface of the art. *On Her Shoulders* **was intentionally designed** for multi-generational viewers and learners.

# Perception/Perspective

## On Her Shoulders

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Visual art is a universal language that helps us see the world more clearly. The main point that the viewer should keep in mind is **there are no right or wrong answers when interpreting the artwork**. If the viewer sees it, then it is in there. Visual art has a way of affecting people in different ways. However, two major elements influence the way that we look at the world. Those elements are:

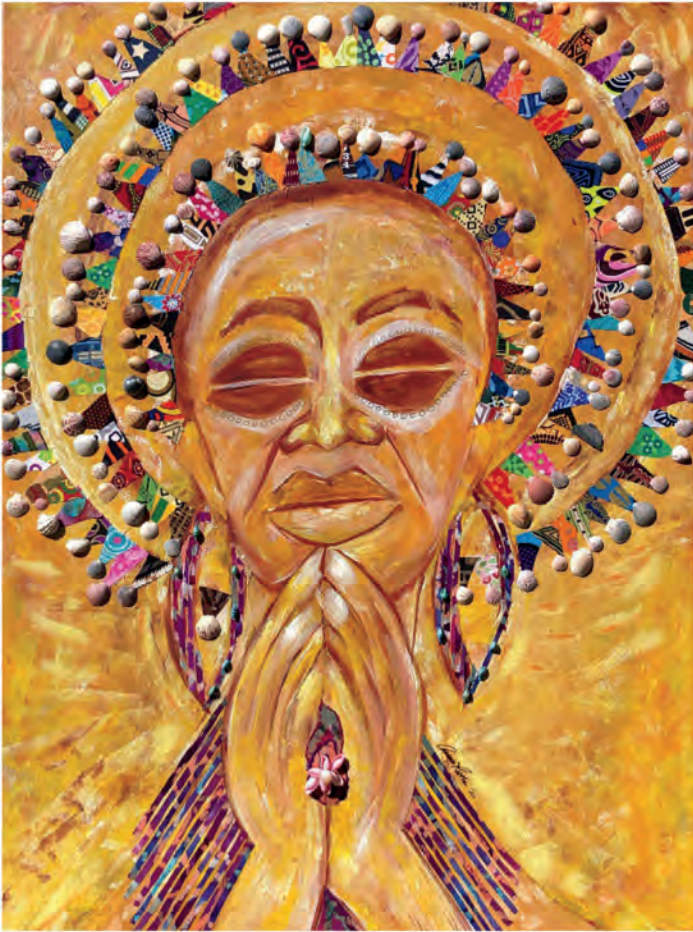
1. **Perception** – knowledge or understanding received by taking in through the mind.

*Many things like our family values, how we feel, what we surround ourselves with, and the things that we are exposed to and so much more...influence our perception....*

2. **Perspective** – the way things look from a given point according to their size, shape, distance, etc.

*How we see the world is also based on our perspective, which is where we are looking from in relation to the object or situation.*





## 1 I Call Upon the Elders

I Call upon the Elders is a tribute to the ancestors. There is one central female figure in the art who is covered by a multitude of individuals. The faces of the elders are depicted using various seashells. The woman's eyes are closed. She sees with spiritual vision.



## 2 Your Silence is Deafening

Your Silence is Deafening is a “call out” piece to our Caucasian sisters and brothers, particularly during all of the publicized racial traumas plastered on the internet and television. The image shows two women that can represent two distinctive parts of one person or two tired sisters. This tiredness is shown in their eyes. The silence-- Is it because the tongue is bound or is the tongue-tied.

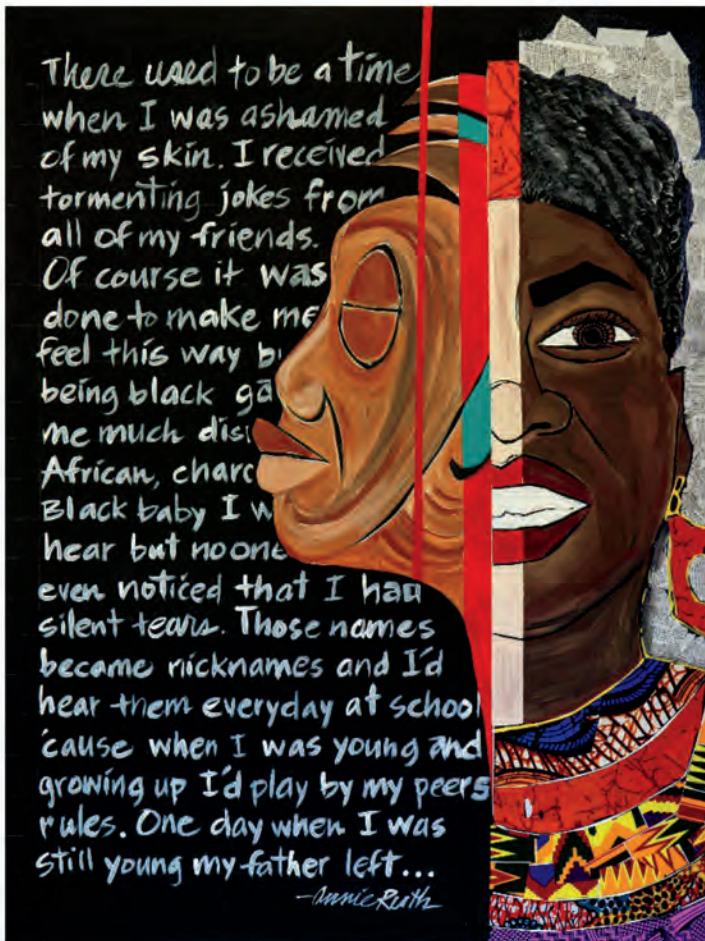




### 3 The Bloodline

(The Bloodline) celebrates the heritage of this particular Black woman. She honors her Christian heritage along with her African ancestry. The subdued cross in the woman's face symbolizes the value that she places in her salvation. The image highlights two women in her bloodline, with a focus on the yellow rose and wood shingle for her hair (covering).





## 4 A Black Woman Nothing Else

A Black Woman, Nothing Else brings light to subject of color-ism, racism and self-esteem. It is the third version of work by the artist, which explores her personal battle. She continues to address this theme because of its timeless relevance for generations of Black women of various skin tones.



## 5 Washing her feet

Washing Her Feet is a statement of humility and a focus on health care disparities for Black women. The work is a symbolic work which was inspired by the artist' mother. For over 8 years her mother told doctors that glass was in her foot but no one ever listened She walked on that glass embedded foot until, finally, one doctor answered her plea for help.





## 6 Revealing Superwoman

Revealing Superwoman shows that a Black woman's super power is demonstrated through her faith and spirit. The Black woman depicted is reminiscent of a sister from the 70's Black power movement. She boldly wears the Adinkra symbol on her chest, showing the world that she does not do anything in her own strength.





## 7 We Wear the mask

We Wear the Mask focuses on the multi-lingual lives that Black women lead. They operate in numerous systems and roles, oftentimes being the only one present and establishing a place for the others who will follow her. The mask often hides her pain but in a mask with eye openings, the eyes tell the true story.



## 8 Guard your heart

Guard Your Heart focuses on self-care. The cares of the world are always grabbing at the heart of Black women. This work demonstrates that the Black woman must make a great effort to guard that, which is most precious to her. She does not do this on her own. She relies on the wisdom and knowledge of those who have walked before her.



## 9 Face like a flint

Face Like a Flint is sober instruction to a young woman with distractions in her life. “Don’t look to the left nor to the right but set your face as a flint and move forward into your destiny.”





## 10 Triune (3 faces)

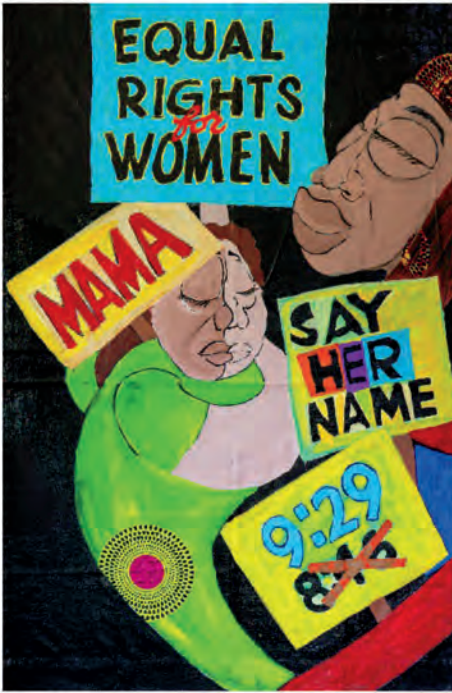
Triune looks at the multi-dimension of 3-parts of the Black woman [Spirit, Soul and body], SOUL - [mind, will and emotions]. For this particularly Black woman the work explores the intersection of those tri-parts.



## 11 Drops

Drops is reflective of the blood, sweat, tears, and oil in the lives of Black women. The artist's daughter often teases her about the sounds in the night that she would hear and waking up to an oil drenched forehead. Those sounds were the sound of prayer and the oil was the blessings of prayer and protection that covered her as she slept and would wake to face the next day.





## 12 My Sister For real, for real?

My Sister, For real, For real? is a heartfelt question to white women and women of other ethnicities that say, "I am down with the struggle", "I stand with you", "we are in this together" and the many other words of solidarity. Many of our sisters didn't really HEAR George Floyd's universal call to "mama".

ARE YOU MY SISTER, FOR REAL, FOR REAL?





## 13 Cornbread & Collards

Cornbread & Collards is a traditional African American meal. Collards are a type of dark leafy green. Although not indigenous to the African continent, the green traveled to the Americas on slave ships with enslaved Africans. (The way that we cook the greens was passed down from our ancestors). In African American families, “Cornbread & Collards were the only items on the menu for dinner (there was no meat, except (maybe) the meat the collards were cooked with. The hearty nutritious broth from the greens is called “pot likker” or “pot liquor”.



## 14 Intercession

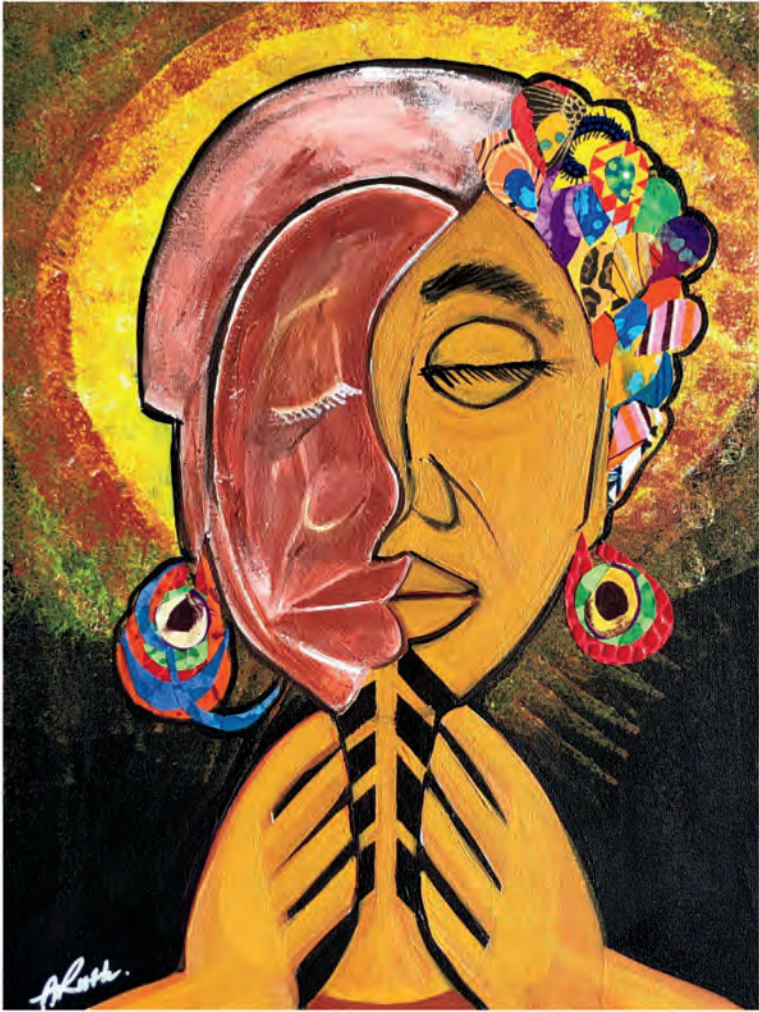
Intercession is a look into that secret place of Black women that work to help others. They know that the true power is revealed as they take the needs of the people before the alter with intercession. In that place of prayer where the words become music and fragrance.





## 15 Coat of many colors

**Coat of Many Colors** shines a spotlight on the visionary Black woman. The Black woman who is called to save her people. Like Joseph, in the scriptures, she adorns her coat of many colors. It reminds her of who she is. Her coat is also worn on her head-- it is her covering.



## 16 Intercession (The Study)

**Intercession: The Study** explores the power of prayer in the lives of Black Women that are strong in their faith. The illumination of the light that comes from the woman is indicative of the Holy Spirit that lives within her to empower her to pray.



# Lesson Plans



**Inspired by the themes in the**

ON HER SHOULDERS EXHIBIT

# Arts Curriculum Integration Plan-

Arts, Reading, and Technology Focused Project based on  
Seventh Grade Ohio Learning Standards

## 1. Overview or brief statement to describe the residency:

**Theme of the Artwork:** (Triune)- Me, Myself and I-  
Individual and collective expression

Each individual canvas represents the student's reflection of himself/herself—

Students use a canvas board to create a piece that reflects their individual voice and what is important to them, as it relates to the theme of the artwork. By compiling all of the canvas boards, we are able to view the collective voice of the children through the final completed piece.





## **2. Big Idea / Inquiry Questions:**

Big Idea: “**Triune**”- (Me, myself and I)

1. What do they see in themselves?
2. How their actions effect their worlds— family, school, communities, neighborhoods?
3. What cause and effect relationships are involved in making positive changes in yourself— your community? Your world?

## **3. Fine Arts: Visual Art Objectives**

[Producing/Performing] –

2PR

Manipulate materials, tools and technology in conventional and unconventional ways

Create a work of art.

5PR

Create a work of art in collaboration with others to address a social or cultural issue.

[Responding]

1RE

Speculate about an artist’s intentions and message in a work using relevant references to the work.

2RE

Compare and contrast diverse viewpoints about works of art.

## **4. English Language Arts**

[Reading Standards for Information Text] – Craft and structure

RI.7.6

Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

[Speaking & Listening]- Presentation of knowledge and ideas

SL.7.4

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

**Key Vocabulary Words** - Triune, vision, spirit, inner eye, three-parts of self, dreams, goal, circle, shared vision

## **5. Information and Communication Technology**

Topic 1: Identify and use appropriate digital learning tools and resources to accomplish a defined task.

6-8.ICT.1.b.

Select and use digital learning tools or resources to support planning, implementing and reflecting upon a defined task.



## 6. Sequence of Learning Activities

	<b>Action Step</b>
1	Introduction: Perspective and Perception. Students will verbally process their ideas to create a rough concept, using marker, colored pencil, or crayons
2	Use different images to construct a canvas, using various mediums and art materials. Research via technology devices. Select digital images for references and use in development of artistic theme.
3	Students apply various artistic techniques (i.e. texture, mixed media, etc.) to their panels to emphasize and express the theme
4	Use collage and mixed media to complete the designs. Utilize various artistic techniques to emphasize the theme in the design.
5	Using descriptive words and phrases to create a choral piece with Ms. Annie Ruth. Create short sentences, using “me, myself and I” that describes you. Use “I am _____” as your final sentence. Students analyze, discuss, and connect a poem, rap, or song of existing authors, writers, etc. using repetition for themes of the art they have created.





# Arts Curriculum Integration Plan-

Arts Focused Project for Family/Community Engagement

## 1. Theme of the Artwork: I am...



## Mask-Making Inspired by Lion King Musical & “We Wear the Mask” artwork by Annie Ruth

*Folklore* is the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth. In many African countries, the storyteller is called a griot (*pronounced gree-OH or GREE-ott*).

A griot is a West African storyteller, singer, poet, musician, and oral historian. ... The griot keeps records of all the births, deaths, marriages through the generations of the village or family. Master of the oral traditions, the griot plays a key role in West African society.

### **Types of masks**

In African cultures, masks are used for many different reasons but this lesson will mainly focus on use for Storytelling and Entertainment/theater

### **Objectives**

Students will understand the importance of African masks and their use in African culture. Students will create masks, utilizing mixed media that links African storytelling and folklore with their modern life. Students will learn about symbolism, such as Adinkra symbols and have the choice of adorning their masks with their chosen symbols.

Students will also design and create theme-based masks that tells their story, utilizing elements from the Lion King Production and design principles that they have learned in the art sessions. Students will reflect upon the assignment



and discuss their works. As a culminating activity, students will exhibit their work.

### Some Visual Art Standards covered:

<b>Indicator:</b>	Create an original work of art that illustrates a story or interprets a theme.
<b>Standard:</b>	Creative Expression and Communication
<b>Benchmark:</b>	Develop and select a range of subject matter and ideas to communicate meaning in two and three-dimensional works of art.
<b>Indicator:</b>	Connect various art forms and artistic styles to their cultural traditions.
<b>Standard:</b>	Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts
<b>Benchmark:</b>	Recognize and describe visual art forms and artworks from various times and places.
<b>Indicator:</b>	Identify artworks from their communities or regions and communicate how they reflect social influences and cultural traditions.
<b>Standard:</b>	Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts
<b>Benchmark:</b>	Identify and describe the different purposes people have for creating works of art.

### Procedure

1. Students will select a character in the Lion King that is reflective of his or her personality or students

- will create an African inspired original mask that is reflective of his or her personality.
2. The mask should be representative of the student or represent a story that the student is interested in sharing.
  3. The mask should be the student's original creation.

### **Synopsis of the process:**

Students will listen to African/African inspired music and imagine how they envision themselves and brainstorm on what role they see themselves playing in the setting.

Start by making a pencil sketch of the mask in their journals.

### **Choice of materials:**

Cardboard, paper Mache and other mixed media materials, such as raffia, cowrie shells, etc.

Use acrylic paint markers and acrylic paint to make patterns and details on the mask. Use colors that bring out the mask's intention and function.

After masks are finished, students will share them with the class, in preparation for the Community Share Exhibition.

### **Discussions and Outcomes:**

What did you enjoy most about the process of creating your mask? What do all of the masks have in common? What makes each mask different?



Participants will create two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms using the technique of cardboard cutout, Paper Mache and other mixed media materials. They will learn how to work with other students to create their masks. After completing their masks, students will share their experience creating the mask. The purpose of this sharing is for the students to practice sharing their experiences, the process of working and actively engaging in storytelling about things that are important in their lives.

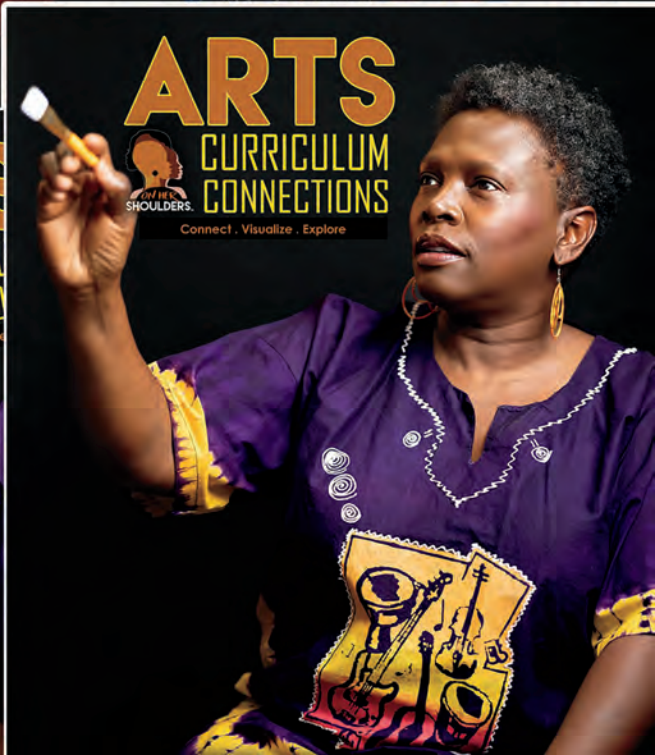


Session #/ Focus Area	Action Step
<p>1. Introduction to Masks and their connection to African folklore and storytelling</p>	<p>Share authentic African masks from various countries in the continent, demonstrating how they connect to African storytelling and folklore. (Interactive participation with students that includes music, song and a brief introduction to Lion King production)</p>
<p>2. I AM... (Self-reflection, positive self-image).</p>	<p>“You are great is the main emphasis of this session”.</p> <p>Students will use personal journals to list all of their positive attributes and compare them to characters in the Lion King production.</p>

Which Lion King character do relate to most	Students will use pencil, marker and large drawing paper sketch out what they want their mask to look like. (This will be their original African inspired design or character for the Lion King production.)
3. Creating a template for the student's mask	Students will create transferable template of their mask and transpose the image to cardboard or paper Mache
4. Crafting the mask	Students will paint cardboard, apply layers paper Mache masks and embellish mask with mixed media materials.
5. Detailing the mask	Students will add symbols, shapes, raffia, cowrie shells, and details like Adina symbols to their masks to help visually accent their stories
6. Finalizing details on the mask	Final details applied to masks. Spray or brush individual masks with clear acrylic coating for hanging or costuming apparatus to be attached for displaying or wearing.
7. Community Share Exhibition	Students publicly share created masks and stories created during the workshop (Group or Individual)









# Annie Ruth

Annie Ruth is an internationally respected visual artist, author and arts educator. Her work positively influences audiences in Europe, Africa, and throughout the United States. She has published over forty volumes of poetry, books and articles for both children and adults.

Her curriculum sets are used in educational and cultural institutions around the world. She earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from National University in San Diego, California and studied graphic design at the University of Cincinnati, College of Design Architecture and Art. Annie Ruth is a trailblazer who fuses her artistic talents to collaborate with major cultural institutions and museums to bring art directly to the community.

Annie Ruth has worked as a professional artist for 41 years. She has exhibited in both national and international museums, institutions and venues including the National Afro American Museum & Cultural Center, Cincinnati Museum Center and National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Her commissioned works are in the collections of Fifth Third Bank, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, the Presbyterian Foundation, and numerous other corporate and private collections.

A few of her awards include the Athena International Leadership Award, NAACP Innovative Arts Educator, YWCA Career Woman of Achievement, Ohio Senate Commendations and U.S. House of Representatives Congressional Recognition.

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