

Retarded Boy Wins Art Prize

It's a rare 11-year-old who wouldn't be thrilled to win first prize in a national art contest. But for Leonard Sampiere, the recognition of his artistic talent was especially significant.

Leonard is classified as mentally retarded. His painting of a green-eyed snowman pelted by white snowflakes against a white background was judged the best of 67 original Christmas card designs by the National Association for Retarded Children. The paintings were submitted by retarded youths ages 8 to 19 in special classes all over the country.

Mrs. Teresa Sampiere said her son was "just overwhelmed" by the acclaim that followed his winning the competition. "He never thought of himself as an artist before but this might make a change in his life," said Mrs. Sampiere, who was widowed when Leonard was an infant.

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HER SON now attends special classes for the retarded in the Cleveland Elementary School in Cranford, N.J.

Second prize went to Bruce Shaw, 15, who attends the Willowbrook State School, Staten Island, N.Y. Bruce also portrayed a snowman, but his wore a top hat and muffler and was executed in bright shades of red, blue and green.

A church, drawn by Peter Guy Abbott, 19, of the Clark County ARC Sheltered Workshop in Las Vegas, Nev., was awarded third prize.

"What we want to show is that the mentally retarded can be productive and self-sufficient — and that some are very creative," Narissa Nickel, news media consultant for the association, said. "With education and training, they can be taxpayers instead of tax liabilities. Yet thousands of retarded children are sitting at home waiting to get into special education classes."