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Enrichment Academy students learn by throwing and spinning

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WOOSTER -- An arts class Saturday for elementary and middle school students at the Wayne Center for the Arts turned into a throwdown Saturday with lips leveled, necks notched, bellies bowled and feet flattened.

Eight students from the Orrville Middle, Shreve Elementary, Chippewa Middle, Dalton Intermediate, Rittman High, Greene Middle and Norwayne Middle schools threw clay down onto wheels, formed it into plates, cups and bowls, with the pieces containing items that sound a lot similar to body parts: Feet, bellies, necks, shoulders and lips.

The class was part of the 2010 spring session of the Enrichment Academy, which offers students within the Tri-County Educational Service Center region the opportunity to explore classes in the arts, language arts, science and social studies.

Sam Sheller, a former arts teacher in Smithville, worked with Kinzi Arnold (Norwayne), Sarah Boreman (Greene), Katelynn Draeger-Conley (Rittman), Elizabeth Gerber (Dalton), Alexandria Magyar (Chippewa), Krystalyn Martin (Shreve), Ephriam Miller (Orrville) and Kyle Corfman (Orrville), showing them how to throw the clay, center it, secure it, form it, trim it and shape it.

"Centering is the key to everything we do,"

Sheller said after parents began arriving to watch their children work and see the pieces they made.

Sheller has a love for the arts that comes across in his teaching, said Sue Corfman, an Orrville school board member and Kyle's mother. She and her son were Sheller's apprentices last summer at the Smithville Historical Society.

Whether students at the University of Akron Wayne College, adults at the arts center or younger students, Sheller said he enjoys working with all of them.

"This is my passion," he said. "Since I was 5 years old, I have loved the arts, but I didn't do pottery until Ashland College in the '60s."

Sixteen students in two classes learned pottery under Sheller. The art educator said he tries to instill in his students an appreciation for the tradition of handcrafted works of art and gifts made by hands.

In this age of computerization and mass production, it is special to be able to create something handmade, Sheller said. "I tell my students pots are like people. Each one is unique, one of a kind."

Kyle said he took the class because he likes pottery, noting it was something he had done before at the Smithville Historical Society.

Ephriam took a pottery class in August 2009 and thought he would try it again because he likes working on the potter's wheel, he said.

Making a dish was challenging for Krystalyn. She said it was difficult for her because "you can't make it too flat or it will collapse." She liked making a bowl much better.

However, for Sarah, who worked beside Krystalyn, the plate was her favorite part. Sarah said she enjoyed learning more about

how to use the wheel.

Kinzi decided she would take the class because she had never worked on making pottery, and "I always wanted to try it," she said. "What's most challenging is trying to make your first pot."

Despite some obstacles, Kinzi said she would probably try her hand at pottery again.

Katelynn decided to participate in the class in order to find "something to do on a Saturday morning and get out of the house a little bit," she said. As she worked on her project, she said, "This wheel is possessed. It goes by itself and doesn't stop."

Shortly after her comment, the wheel revolved faster, causing her project to fly off of center. "I told you it was possessed," she said.

Like Krystalyn, Alexandria said she found it difficult to make a plate. "You have to bring it out and up and make sure it doesn't break," she said. She also liked making the bowl the best.

Because of her love of art is why Elizabeth took the class, she said. Another reason was she wanted to make a pot, something she had never done.

Elizabeth's parents, Kirk and Angie Gerber, looked over all of the pottery pieces done by the students and marveled at the work.

"I think they did a really nice job," Angie Gerber said. "They are professional looking."

Angie Gerber said this was the first time her daughter participated in the Enrichment Academy and did so because of her interest in art.

"I think it is a blessing Wayne County has this opportunity to enhance kids' education,"

Sue Corfman said. "It's tougher and tougher at the public school level to offer this kind of class because of funding."

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