

# Building Scene

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

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## Building project: It's 'for the birds'

By Doug Funke  
staff writer

Flower and Furniture Show at the Cuba Conference Center.

This contest, one for the birds, has drawn a flock of interest from seventh and eighth graders in the northern and western suburbs.

That includes Ed Burger, a volunteer drafting teacher, and six students at St. Valentine School in Redford.

Their mission — to construct birdhouses and, less about design, tools, and it is hoped, a little something about birds and their habitats.

Entries will be displayed and winners announced later this month at the International Builders Home,

ter school until the projects were completed. It took five weeks.

Burger "taught with their hands," Burger said of his students. "That's what they're learning. Kids need an opportunity. They need an outlet."

What makes the young builders from St. Valentine different from other entrants is they don't have a shop at the school.

FORTUNATELY, Burger lives nearby and has a basement well-stocked with tools.

The six builders had to come up with \$4.50 for materials and commit to working 1/2 hours once a week af-

ter school until the projects were completed. It took five weeks.

At this point, most aren't too articulate with their hands," Burger said of his students. "That's what they're learning. Kids need an opportunity. They need an outlet."

All six students from St. Valentine worked from the same plan.

"I did some of the difficult cuts," Burger said. "They used a band saw, drill press, hand-powered drill, saber saw, power sander, backsaw and, of course, hand tools."

The birdhouses were fashioned from plywood. A hinged door on the bottom allows for easy cleaning. Shingles are stapled to the roof. The students added their own decorative

touches like flags, mailboxes and antennae.

THE STUDENTS spoke highly of the experience.

"I enjoyed it, just being able to work with power tools," said John Doonan. "You have to have a lot of patience."

Doonan's dad is a carpenter, but young John said he'd rather work with wood as a hobby than for a living.

Chris Prysok had built a birdhouse and stained glass craft projects with his grandma.

"I just like working with my hands," he said. "I like helping out as much as I can. I like learning things. It comes easy."

Damien Fron didn't let the setback of drawing some had wood and having to rework part of his birdhouse get him down.

"It didn't really bother me much because I knew I'd catch up," he said.

Fron is thinking about becoming an architect or draftsman.

Amy Watroba was the only girl at St. Valentine to build a birdhouse.

"IT'S PRETTY much the first thing I ever built," she said. "I enjoyed it so much. I'm going to build shelves for my closet."

Watroba, an outstanding student who excels in math and science, envisions a career in engineering.

Michael Danic, son of an electrical/heating contractor, has helped his dad with some projects around the house, so he isn't exactly a novice when it comes to working with tools.

"It allowed me to use power tools and be with friends," Danic said of his involvement in the contest.

Jason Kieltyka said he never really built anything before attempting a birdhouse. "It was harder than I thought," he said.

He accomplished what he set out to do — building something by himself.

Burger, a retired designer/draftsman for Ford Motor Co., seemed to get as much out of the project as the students.

"I guess I'm really a teacher at heart," he said. "I told them, 'When



JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer

Damien Fron hopes to impress contest judges and perhaps later attract a wren to his birdhouse with decorative touches like a miniature flag and a "For Rent, Cheap," sign.

Gardens during the run of the builders show, March 17-25.

Entries will be judged on accuracy, design, creativity, materials, assembly, decorations and suitability for intended bird.

The contest is sponsored by The Observer &amp; Eccentric Newspapers, Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan and the state Department of Natural Resources.



Shingling is an important part of any residential project, as even young builders know. Here, Amy Watroba handles the staple gun and Mike Danic holds a spacer to ensure correct alignment.

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ties required under the situate. Robert M. Meisner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate and corporate law. You are invited to submit topics which you would like to discuss in this column by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Birmingham 48020. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

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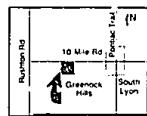
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