

Students visit ceramics class

HIGHMEADOW second graders got a taste of college-level art recently, visiting the studio of Oakland Community College ceramics instructor Robert Piepenburg, where he and his students shared their craft.

About 50 students from Mary Jo Stewart's and Carolyn Rittner's classes took the short field trip to the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

The trip was arranged by Highmeadow parent Donna Carrico, who is a student of Piepenburg's.

"She has a real love of art, which she's transferring to the kids," Rittner said.

Carrico said she believes fine arts really need to be emphasized in schools today, especially in light of cuts.

"One thing that's foremost in my mind is with all the budget cuts Gov.

(John) Engler is making. It's important we keep the kids exposed to art. I'm really grateful to Robert that he allowed us to come."

THE ELEMENTARY students studied the art of ceramics before making the trip, where they were able to see all aspects used in Piepenburg's classroom.

They returned and were able to use their new knowledge to make clay dinosaurs in another class. Students also were able to see what the college is all about. Several have parents who attend classes there.

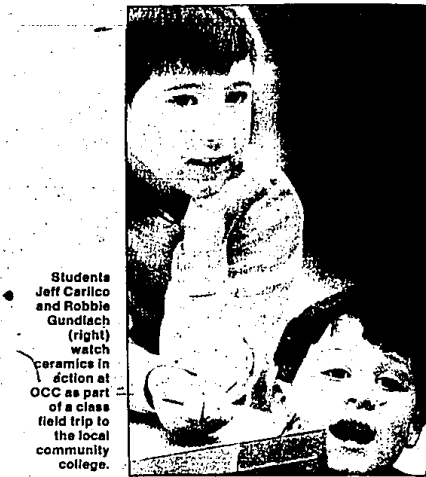
Carrico said she hopes the trip sparks an interest among students in working with clay.

Piepenburg specializes in raku pottery, a 400-year-old Japanese method that was westernized 25 years ago in Colorado. The college campus has evolved as a leader in raku for this region.

Piepenburg is publishing a book on the technique.



Oakland Community College ceramics instructor Robert Piepenburg throws a pot while Highmeadow second graders watch attentively.



Students Jeff Carrico and Robbie Gundlach (right) watch ceramics in action at OCC as part of a class field trip to the local community college.



A manual pot-thrower is still used often, because Piepenburg likes to work outside where electricity is not available.



A lump of clay, which eventually becomes a bowl, is spun and cut down in size.

Staff photos by Sharon LeMieux

Hills councilman issues report on officials' ethics

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

Farmington Hills city councilman Larry Lichtman says he isn't looking for a fight with his recent report on rules for council members' conduct.

"If the council decides to do something (with the report) I would hope the council would do something to have future value instead of dredging up old arguments," Lichtman said.

The 16-page report, plus examples of rules of conduct from other communities, including Novi and Southfield, stem initially from questions council members have had over conduct of their colleagues in 1990. Drafting a report on rules of conduct was discussed and assigned at a city council goals setting meeting in January.

Specifically, council members have been concerned about an apparent breach of an executive session resolution by former mayor Jean Fox and Mayor Aldo Vagnoli in 1990 and contacted representatives in the governor's office and Gov. James Blanchard himself to resolve the conflict between the city and Boys Republic. The resolution prohibited discussion about the then-pending lawsuit against the social service agency on Nine Mile.

The report also stems from concerns about the appearance of conflicts of interest, allegations that some council members have tried to exert undue influence

over members of boards and commissions, and the dissemination of information by council members outside executive sessions.

CITY COUNCIL members are expected to provide questions, suggestions or other materials at the regular 7:30 p.m. meeting Monday, April 8. At that time, council members are expected to ask city attorney John Donohue for any legal questions they may have regarding the report or rules of conduct. That way, Lichtman said, Donohue can provide one comprehensive legal opinion.

"I thought rather than making recommendations (in the report), it would be a better idea to give council members some objective information," Lichtman said. "Hopefully, people will come back with specific comments and questions."

Council members' conduct is dictated by state law, the city charter, the city's code of ethics and Robert's Rules of Order, which govern procedures at official meetings.

Council members have a choice of adopting new rules for themselves, amending the city's code of ethics, forming a new ethics committee or reactivating the committee that formed the first ethics code.

"The charter allows the council to make its own rules," Lichtman said. "The council may feel it wants non-council members involved."

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Kroger employees nab man suspected in purse-snatching

Thanks to two Kroger employees, a suspected robber is in Farmington Hills police custody after the unidentified man apparently ran off with a woman's purse just after 10 p.m. Monday. He was stopped at a nearby gas station.

Police credit employees Dennis Warner, 38, and Fred Floto, 52, with saving the day after the unidentified man walked toward a 58-year-old woman as she approached her car in the parking lot of the new Kroger superstore, 37530 12 Mile near Halsted.

Floto and Warner were unavailable for comment and Kroger manager Al Slonim said he didn't want to comment until he knew all the facts.

The woman, a Tennessee resident, waited for the man to approach her in the parking lot, she told police, because she thought the man was going to ask her a question.

Instead, he grabbed her face, jabbed her in the stomach with his finger and demanded her money, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

WHILE THE woman tried to take her purse off her shoulder, the man grabbed it, breaking the strap. The man then ran southeast to a Shell gas station at 12 Mile

and Halsted, according to the report.

The woman ran back into Kroger's and shouted for someone to call the police. Warner and Floto then ran outside to the Shell station. Warner approached the man, whom he said appeared to be concealing something under his jacket. The man denied he had the woman's purse. But when the man opened his jacket after Warner asked him to, he saw the purse, according to the report.

The man then ran toward Halsted with Warner and a gas station attendant in pursuit. When the man reached a car on Halsted, Warner grabbed him and took him back to the station.

Warner told police that he heard the man say to another man in the car to "go." The car left southbound on Halsted.

Warner, Floto and the gas station attendant stayed with the man until police arrived and took him into custody. The man was expected to be arraigned Tuesday afternoon on charges in connection with strong-arm robbery, said Det. Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills police.

The woman suffered bruises on her face but did not seek medical attention.

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