

Art teachers get the bigger picture at conference

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Council on Culture & Arts

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Lydia Countryman has an extensive background in the arts and education. With numerous degrees in various disciplines including graphic arts and printmaking, elementary education and varied exceptionalities as well as curriculum instruction, her 27-year teaching career has been well informed by her training.

For the past three years, she has served as the art teacher at Franklin County School and her administration supported her recent request to attend the Florida Art Education Association's annual conference for the first time.

This is the largest professional development event in Florida for visual art educators. With nearly 150 presentations, workshops, general sessions and special events offered over four days, Countryman had a staggering number of opportunities to grow as an art educator.

Though presenters hail from all over the state and beyond, the Tallahassee area was well represented and one of Countryman's favorite workshops was led by Florida State University School's elementary art teacher Ruthie Platt.

"It was a thorough presentation on

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Japanese brush painting. She had photos and books and a lot of practice time with authentic materials," said Countryman. "She was there to guide and give support which was helpful because the topic was something I've never had exposure to."

Platt made the experience accessible to Countryman and others by building their confidence and knowledge base. Countryman is eager to introduce her students to this new manner of art-making that allows them to gain an understanding of a different part of the world.

As the Associate Chair of Art Education at FSU, Jeff Broome has attended and presented at the FAEA annual conference for years. He sees the benefits from multiple vantage points. "I think back to my first couple of years teaching and I was so busy that when a conference came my way I was like, 'oh man, I don't have time to go, I'm better suited preparing for my classroom,'" he admitted. "Then when I finally did start going to conference, I was like this is how you stay current and how you don't get stuck in a rut, this is how you get new ideas."

At this year's conference, Broome presented an overview of how art education might deal with the social and emotional needs of children in an increasingly critical world. He underscored that while this is the focus of his own research, there are dozens of other valuable and compelling topics that attendees have access to. "The more we share these ideas, the more the whole art education community benefits from it, everyone's students benefit from it, and the field benefits from it."

Broome's colleague, Sara Scott Shields also presented at the FAEA conference. As an assistant professor in the Department of Art Education at FSU, she was joined by several of her students who are training to enter the field. Shields recognizes that "in a K-12 environment, the art teacher is often the only one in the school so it's a really nice opportunity for them to come together and commune."

She added, "this is a great opportunity for our interns and students learning to become art teachers to see real teachers who are really excited about their practice. It's also nice for me to remember that what I'm doing in the ivory tower of academia has a place. It reminds me why what I'm doing really matters in a bigger picture way."

Cassie Tucker was also seeking a bigger picture at the conference. As the art teacher at Wakulla High School, she wanted to develop ways to use art across other curricular areas. "We're really pushing STEM here in Wakulla," Tucker said, referring to an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math. "I'm hoping to highlight that we could be STEAM which brings in that art component."

One of Tucker's favorite presentations dealt with the influence of science and mathematics on the artwork of Salvador Dali and, because the conference was held this year in St. Petersburg, the workshop was offered at the Salvador Dali Museum.

"How Dali organized the composition of his paintings was very complex," said Tucker, a painter herself. Using the Golden ratio, often referred to as the Fibonacci sequence, workshop attendees were able to deconstruct his artworks based on this naturally occurring continuum of increasing units. "It's like the shape of the nautilus shell, where it gets larger and larger. I'm eager to try that with my students."

This was also the first time that art teachers from Wakulla County have attended the FAEA conference and Tucker was inspired by the emphasis on art teachers as artists in their own right.

The Artist Bazaar component of the conference allows for teachers to sell their creations and Tucker sold four paintings as several prints of her work. Additionally, Marilyn Proctor-Givens, an art teacher at Lincoln High School, was selected to take part in the juried FAEA Member Virtual Exhibition and her artwork "Generational Legacy" received the Dade Art Educators Association Award.

Other locals were recognized for their contributions to art education in the state. Barbara Davis, an associate professor at Florida State University School who teaches high school sculpture was recognized at the conference as Florida's Outstanding Art Educator of the Year and the Council on Culture & Arts was presented with the FAEA's Community Service/Institution/Commercial/Corporate Award.

These accolades and the participation by art education leaders and practitioners from the Big Bend region underscore a final point made by Shields. "The conference is a chance to show off all the great things that are happening in a part of Florida that sometimes gets left off the radar. The Panhandle can get forgotten about and this provides an opportunity to remind people that we're here and we're a vibrant arts community and we have phenomenal art teachers and programs."

Amanda Kariath Thompson is the Assistant Director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).



Ruthie Platt teaches a Japanese brush painting workshop at the FAEA conference.



Marilyn Proctor-Givens artwork 'Generational Legacy' won the Dade Art Educators Association Award.



Lydia Countryman attends Ruthie Platt's Japanese brush painting workshop at the FAEA conference. PHOTOS BY BARBARA DAVIS

Obituaries

George Alexander Ragans Jr.
George Alexander Ragans, Jr. 78, of Sneads passed away Saturday, October 28, 2017, peacefully in his home.

Delivered by his grandfather, J.P. Kinsey, MD, George began his life in Pinetta, Florida. He grew up in Madison, Florida where he graduated from Madison County High School. After serving in the United States Air Force, he returned home and married his beloved and devoted wife, Ann Cone Ragans, sharing 54 years of marriage.

George then settled into a career of over thirty-four years with the Florida Department of Corrections beginning in Raiford as one of the original shotgun squad members at Florida State Prison. Working through the ranks, George earned an Associates Degree from Lake City Community College and his Bachelors of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from the Florida State University. One highlight in his career was breaking ground and overseeing construction of Liberty Correctional Institution, the fastest built institution in Florida, where he served as Warden. Retiring as Warden of Calhoun Correctional Institution in 1996, George cherished his family and could be routinely seen supporting them from the classrooms to the ballfields, dance competitions, and the volleyball courts. He was a longtime member of Sneads First United Methodist Church where he served as a trustee, board member, and Chairman of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee. He was also a member of the Morocco Shriners and Masons, Greenville Lodge.

He was preceded in death by his parents, George and Frances; great grandson, Jon Ryan Beauchamp. Survivors include his wife, Ann, children, Georgia Arnold and husband, Kevin, Kathy Sneads and husband, Charles, Robert Ragans and wife, Monica; eight grandchildren, Wiley Beauchamp (Meghan), Jon Beauchamp (Kendra), Jenna Sneads, Dustin Sneads, Kinsey Ragans, Chase Ragans, Brody Ragans, and Mason Ragans; three great grandchildren, Fenton, Annabella and Bristol Beauchamp all of Sneads, Florida; sister, June Ragans Wood of Tallahassee, Florida. George was also blessed with a multitude of nieces and nephews and many loving family and friends.

Funeral Services will be 10 a.m. (CST) Wednesday, November 1, 2017 at Sneads First United Methodist Church with James & Sikes Funeral Home Maddox Chapel directing. Interment will be 2:00 p.m. (CST) at Evergreen Cemetery in Greenville, Florida.

The family will receive friends one hour prior to funeral services at the church.

Contributions may be made in memory of George to the First United Methodist Church in Sneads, Florida or Emerald Coast Hospice Marianna, Florida. Condolences may be made online at www.jamesandsikesfuneralhomes.com

In Memoriams
In Loving Memory Of
CHRISTOPHER JOHN MAZZA
05/13/1984 - 11/01/2005

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Death Notices

- Bishop, Jr. John Elmer** age 60, of Tallahassee, October 26, 2017, Abbey Funeral Home and Tallahassee Memory Gardens.
- Dasher, Dr. Paul S.** age 83, of Tallahassee, October 28, 2017, Bevis Funeral Home
- DeCastro, Rhonda** age 75, of Tallahassee, October 27, 2017, Family Funeral Home & Cremation Services
- Lazarus, Renee J.** age 60, of Woodville, FL, October 28, 2017, Tillman of Tallahassee
- Levine, Candy Lynn** age 72, of Tallahassee, October 30, 2017, Bevis Funeral Home
- O'Neill, Margaret Lucille "Peggy"** age 83, of Bainbridge, October 29, 2017, Ivey Funeral Home
- Nelson, John "Sonny"**, October 28, 2017, Lanier-Andler Funeral Home
- Ragans Jr. George Alexander** age 78, of Sneads, October 28, 2017, James & Sikes Funeral Homes
- Ricks, Willie H.** age 96, of Tallahassee, October 28, 2017, Culley's MeadowWood Funeral Home
- Royal, Martha Shirley** age 84, of Bainbridge, October 29, 2017, Ivey Funeral Home
- Shiver, Ora Blanche** age 85, of Monticello, October 27, 2017, Beggs Funeral Home-Monticello Chapel

John Elmer Bishop, Jr.
John Elmer Bishop, Jr., 60, a resident of Houston, Texas for 26 years, and formerly of Tallahassee, passed away October 26, 2017, after a short but valiant battle with cancer.

A son of the late John Elmer Bishop, Sr., and Mary Bradley Garner, who survives, he was born March 18, 1957, in Tallahassee. Also preceding him in death are his brother, David E. Bishop; paternal grandparents, Henry E. and Ruby G. Bishop; and maternal grandparents, Mamie Burt and Frank R. Bradley. He was a graduate of Godby High School, FSU and he served in the United States Air Force, receiving an honorable discharge as a Staff Sergeant.

He is survived by Mary Bradley Garner, Cesar Gonzalez, Becky B. Panbianco, Russell Bishop and Danny Bishop.

Visitation is from 5:30 until 7:00 PM, Thursday, November 2, 2017, at Abbey Funeral Home. The graveside service is 11:00 AM, Friday, November 3, 2017, at Tallahassee National Cemetery. Memorial donations may be made to a charity of your choice. Online condolences may be expressed at www.abbeyfh.com

Abbey Funeral Home
850-562-1518 | www.abbeyfh.com

OBITUARY POLICY

Renee J. Lazarus
Renee Janice Rachow Lazarus, 60, of Woodville, FL, passed unexpectedly at home on June 15, 1921 in Marianna, FL. Born June 29, 1957, the Maumee, Ohio native was the daughter of Albert and Myra Friedenberg. A retired RN, she was a University of Miami graduate and had worked at several facilities during her career. Survivors include her daughters, Mary Q. and Maggie K. Norton; sons, Vernon S. and Kyle R. Lazarus; two grandchildren, Cerrisa Bodiford and David "Bry" Watts, all of Tallahassee; two brothers, Mark Rachow of Michigan and Rob Rachow of Ohio. A Memorial Service will be held at a later date.

Willie H. Ricks
Willie Ricks, 96, of Tallahassee, passed away on Saturday, October 28, 2017. She was born on June 15, 1921 in Marianna, FL. She was preceded in death by her husband, parents and 3 children.

Mrs. Ricks is survived by 4 children; Eileen Jones, Bridgeport, CT, Ron Ricks (Allison) of Tallahassee, Jim Ricks (Cathy) of Tallahassee and Gene Ricks (Glennda) Crawfordville. As well as 17 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild and lots of special nieces and nephews.

Graveside services will be held at 2pm CST on Wednesday November 1, 2017 at Evergreen Memorial Gardens - Panama City, FL.