

SCHOOL & FAMILY
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 LOCAL



CHAIRES
 ELEMENTARY
 MELTS ART
 CLASS WITH
 LESSONS
 ABOUT THE
 HOLOCAUST

TEACHING TOLERANCE

AMANDA KARIOTH THOMPSON
 COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Jan Munn has been teaching art at Chaires Elementary School for 16 years. In that time, she has designed countless lessons and projects that inspire her students to explore their creativity, express their feelings and ideas, and learn about our cultural history. She recently challenged her fourth-graders with a new art project. This one encourages them to exercise their compassion and examine the consequences of prejudice, specifically as it relates to the Holocaust.

In 1994, the state of Florida passed a bill that mandated Holocaust instruction for students from kindergarten to 12th grade. To assist in this effort, there are nine Task Force sites across the state that offer intensive training programs, curricula and resources for teachers. Tallahassee is the location for one of them, the Holocaust Education Resource Council (HERC), and Munn has become one of the organization's most ardent supporters.

"I started going to the HERC workshops because I was like 'How do you teach the Holocaust?' It's so difficult and it was so horrible." After years of involvement and training, Munn not



PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON

TOP LEFT: Students focus on rolling out their ink evenly on Styrofoam trays. TOP RIGHT: Logan Riedle reveals her butterfly print in art class at Chaires. ABOVE: Chaires art teacher Jan Munn demonstrates how to spread this printing ink using a brayer.

only is adept at bringing the subject into her own classroom, she's helping others do the same. As a member of HERC's education committee, she's working to develop teaching trunks that include books and other classroom resources including copies of her own lesson plans for other educators to use if they wish.

Using age-appropriate instructional

strategies, Munn has learned to introduce the content to her students gradually. "Kindergarten just gets a little piece of it. I'll read them a Dr. Seuss book like 'Yertle the Turtle,' " an allegory representing the rise and fall of the Nazi party. "As they get older I go more in depth. By the time the kids get to high school, they're digging really deep into the survivors' stories, but

we have to go very gently for our little tykes and build on it as we go."

Munn's fourth-graders have been studying "The Butterfly," a poem written by Pavel Friedmann in 1942 at The-resienstadt concentration camp. This camp is often referred to as Terezin, the garrison city where it was located. Inspired by that poem, students are undertaking a printmaking project and incorporating a butterfly motif into their designs. After Munn explained the printmaking process, showed examples and demonstrated the techniques, students were able to translate their sketches into actual prints. In some cases, this proved more complicated than expected.

Grayson Blake found it difficult to evenly distribute the ink onto his Styrofoam printing plate. "I added too much or too little. It's really hard to get the perfect amount to get the perfect print." With an attitude of determination, he said, "even though I wasn't that lucky today, I'm going to keep trying."

Though Grayson and his classmates have learned about printmaking through this lesson, they have gained much more than that. When reflecting

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on the essential message of the classwork they've done, Grayson said, "Kids were taken away and some were separated from their families. It's important to remember that. Doing this helps us remember that."

Logan Riedle shared a similar sentiment about the prints she created. "It makes me feel better to make art about it. It makes me feel like people still care about what happened." After learning about Terezín, Nicole Bean imagined that creating art would have also helped those imprisoned there. "In that camp, they were starving and they had no happy life at all. The kids, they used art to calm themselves down."

Many artworks were created at Terezín, largely due to the forethought and bravery of Frederika "Friedl" Dicker-Brandeis, an Austrian artist and educator. "Everybody was told they were going to a work camp and they were allowed to bring one suitcase," Munn said. "Instead of bringing clothes, Friedl brought art supplies. She knew there would be kids there and that she would need to help them. She knew that things you can't talk about, sometimes, you can draw about, you can paint about."

In the spirit of Dicker-Brandeis, Munn is using art to help her students channel their imagination and emotions. She's even taking it one step further. As an extension of the lessons learned in the art room, Munn has championed a school butterfly garden that has been built and planted as a permanent Holocaust memorial.

Additionally, the artwork created by Chaires students will be on display in the lobby of Ruby Diamond Concert Hall on



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Art students could choose from a variety of paper and ink colors for their prints.

March 25 for the "Requiem of Resistance" concert featuring the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra and the FAMU Concert Choir. The performance is an homage to the artistic resistance at Terezín and it will tell



the story of the historic performances of Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem.

"Through art, I'm teaching tolerance and acceptance. Not just tolerance, but acceptance," Munn said.

"We're teaching kids to get along; we're teaching sharing, manners, all the things that they need. If we don't study history, we will repeat history."

Amanda Karioth 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).

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