

TLHLife

Let Us Bump You Up!
 With ACB's Adjustable CD
2.25%* APY 36 Months
*If you roll over 36-month CD rate during the first 18 months of your term, we'll automatically raise your rate to the 18M-month - no action required on your part!

American Commerce Bank
534 North Monroe Street • Tallahassee, FL 32301
 AmericanCommerceBank.com • 850-681-7761



Robin Rodgers encourages campers to explore different glazing techniques during pottery camp. AMANDA THOMPSON

TAKING THE WHEEL

Campers mold clay and shape new talents

Amanda Karioth Thompson
 Council on Culture & Arts

“I’m one of those people who can’t stand not knowing how to do something,” confessed 11-year-old Gordon Lichtstein. Several years ago, his inquisitive nature led him to pottery. “I saw a video of a master potter spinning a huge vase and I wanted to learn. I expected that I was going to be super good at first, but no.”

Over several summers, with instruction from local artist Robin Rodgers, Gordon has become a proficient potter. For the past 10 years Rodgers has offered a camp for youngsters interested in clay techniques and Gordon reminisced about some of his earliest attempts.

“Up until now, if I tried to make a pot by myself it would be a 50 percent chance that it would work. I want to make it a 99 percent chance. I’ve gotten better and better and, this year, it’s the best I’ve done because I haven’t needed

any help with any of my pots.”

While all campers get the opportunity to try hand-building and creating with rolled out slabs of clay, many of them are especially excited about using a potter’s wheel. Rodgers explained “most everybody makes a bowl to start with. Something that’s wide and open so you can see how thick it is when you’re learning to pull it up. When they get that feeling, when they know it’s going right, you keep working with that.”

Gordon knows that feeling well and said “there’s a certain giddiness when something goes right. It’s a burst of excitement. When something goes wrong though, I never feel badly, I think ‘what did I get wrong and can I fix it.’ If you fail, you should at least get something out of it.”

Failure is an important part of the learning process and many campers have gained insights only persistence can provide including 7-year-old Eva Uchino. She’s a first-time camper and said, “when I came here on my first day, I did not know how to make anything but I’ve started to get better.”

Eva realized “it’s not like if you want to do something you do it well right

See **POTTERY**, Page 2C

Pottery

Continued from Page 1C

away. You have to work hard just like in football, gymnastics and ballet. Even if you think you can't do it, still try."

These sentiments were echoed by 8-year-old camper Sophia Van Asten. This is her second year attending Rodgers' camp and she said, "I never thought I could make a pot on my own." Due to her determination, she can also make decorative tiles and sculptures.

Nine-year-old Jenna Sokllow has also gained an appreciation for the lessons pottery teaches. "I've been here for three years," she shared "and I've learned something valuable each year. I've learned that pottery isn't just putting clay on a wheel and then you're done."

This is by design as Rodgers aims to show campers the diversity, complexity and history pottery carries. He has an extensive knowledge of clay and holds an MFA in ceramics from FSU. He's worked locally as a professional artist for 30 years and has taught ceramics in schools and art centers to students of all ages.

Rodgers delights in sharing unusual techniques that campers may not otherwise have access to, including horsehair firing. After seeing examples of horsehair pottery, he was curious and purchased a piece. "I brought it home and studied it and was trying to figure out how they might have done it. This was before you could read it in a book or see it on YouTube. I experimented for a while and I've zeroed in on it now."

It's an American Indi-



A camper examines a horsehair pot, which must cool off and then be scrubbed clean.

AMANDA THOMPSON

an technique, though not an ancient one. Rodgers relayed the origin story. "The potters in the southwest use an open bonfire. When it all burns down and the pots are peeping out of the coals, they take a stick and pull the pots out. As they bent over, their long hair touched the hot pot. It singed on there and will not scrub off, the carbon makes a print."

Campers don't handle the hot pots themselves but they do get to carefully apply horsehair and feathers to the surface. They can also sprinkle sugar on their pots which creates freckles and can flare up slightly, giving campers a thrill.

These experiences excite Rodgers too and he especially enjoys think-

ing about pottery from an anthropological standpoint. Years ago, he took a trip to England and visited an archaeological dig in what was once a Roman town.

"I found a broken piece of pottery and I could tell it had been made on a wheel because it had the finger grooves in it. On one side was where the handle attached to the pot and on the opposite side, you could see a perfect thumb print where somebody had pressed to make it stick. So 2,000 years ago somebody made that and I was holding it in my hands."

"When you make things out of clay, you're carrying on history," she said. "There's a connection to people and civilizations from long ago. All of us, ultimately, are on the planet for the next ones that are coming after us. There were people who got it ready for us when we were coming along. These students put their own creativity in that and they're going to grow. They're now a part of it and that's a great thing to me."

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).

TALLAHASSEE MODEL RAILROAD SHOW & SALE

Saturday, June 23, 2018

**North Florida Fairgrounds
Buildings 2 & 4 - 9am to 4pm**

Adults & Children 13 and older: \$6

Children 12 and younger are free

FREE PARKING

