



'A DOUBLE THREAT'

STUDENTS AMP UP SKILLS AT 'WIT AND LIT' CAMP

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COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Authors Eric Carle and Dr. Seuss have a lot in common. Not only have they penned some of the most iconic and popular children's books in history, they illustrated them as well. Amaya Davis, 9, calls this "a double threat" because these authors are adept at "doing two things at the same time." She has similar aspirations and takes inspiration from successful authors.

"I'd like to be a writer and I'd also like to be an artist and so writing books would be perfect because, of course, there's sometimes pictures in books. I think it's a great skill because in the future you can be a New York Times best-seller," Amaya said.

Thanks to the "Wit and Lit" summer camp

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PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON

TOP: Book cover illustrations in progress at the Good Sam Arts camp. ABOVE: Camp director Jania Kadar observes a Wit and Lit camper.

Camp

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presented by Good Sam Arts, emerging writers like Amaya were able to learn about authors like Carle and Seuss while practicing their own writing skills. A ministry of Good Samaritan United Methodist Church, Good Sam Arts is a full-service arts school offering ongoing instruction in a variety of disciplines.

"We have a lot of authors within our community," said camp director Jania Kadar. "For some people, it's a pastime, and for some people, it's their bread and butter. Writing is another arm of art and having a week dedicated to writing stories just made total sense."

Ten-year-old Kyla Edwards agrees. Last year, she attended a Good Sam visual art camp and enjoyed it. She was excited to try the Wit and Lit camp this year. "I had a pretty good writing grade at school so I was thinking maybe I could get some more ideas from here. It helps me develop stuff and get the ideas out of my brain and onto paper."

During the camp, Kyla and the other young authors explored the writing process and learned some tricks for organizing their stories, including the use of a web diagram.

"In the middle is the main idea," Kyla explained. "The lines connect to bubbles, which are some really big details. All the other bubbles are smaller details that connect to the bigger details. It helps me figure it out so the reader will be really interested in it."

Running the gamut from fictional to autobiographical works and informational to opinion pieces, campers diligently worked out their ideas and committed them to the page. Kadar was encouraged to see that campers didn't shy away from serious and emotional subject matter.

"I think there's a false perception that, for children, everything should be cheerful and fun. They have to deal with

some really heavy things, too. Writing about the fact that their parents work a lot and that they miss them, writing about divorced families, writing about loss, it helps them process and understand the world around them. Writing helps them to articulate what they're seeing and experiencing."

Kadar's role at Good Sam Arts doesn't end with being camp director. She oversees all of the programming related to children and she comes from a long line of creative educators. An active artist herself, she knew that wherever she taught, the arts would be a driving factor.

"I wanted to bring in all these different components that I knew were influential to my creative make up and give that back to the kids," she said.

Committed to inclusion, Kadar said that Good Sam Arts "meets people where they are spiritually and also creatively. We have children



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Campers using web diagrams to organize their stories.



of all different spiritual backgrounds and we welcome that. We really like to be as diverse as we can be."

In valuing diverse perspectives, Good Sam Arts is able to encourage young writers to use their own unique voice to express their ideas. "The arts are here to stay. You

can't shush the arts and you can't shush kids, and so we don't."

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the education and exhibitions 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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