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## What's cookin'? A great city-district partnership!

By *John Roach*

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If, as Hope Elementary artist-in-residence Amy Miller believes, "Art's the sprinkles on the cupcake of life," then the City of Carlsbad Cultural Arts Office's education grants program is the oven that enables our students to cook up some tasty creations.

Arts Office Coordinator Colleen Finnegan says, "Our City understands its commitment to the quality of life of all its residents. The grant program is a fundamental aspect of that commitment."

Individual grants typically range from \$800-\$1,200. Matching funds raised by each school double the support and expand the artistic possibilities.

Over the years, our District's sites and students have benefitted from much Arts Office largesse. This year, arts education grants are funding Carlsbad High School Band Boosters, Choral Boosters, Drama Club and Speech and Debate Team efforts as well as a Jefferson Elementary string program, Pacific Rim Elementary dance instruction program and Valley Middle resident choreographer.

A grant also is funding a dynamic arts project that has Hope fourth-graders fired up with a burning desire to create. In fact, Miller reports, "The kids are unbelievably excited; both the boys and girls. They couldn't wait to get started and are eager to work meticulously on completing their pieces."

In a classroom colorfully embellished with hundreds of student creations and decorated with motivational sayings ("There are no mess-ups; only creative solutions!"), students exuberantly pursue the ancient craft of woodburning. The project coordinates with their Native American social studies curriculum.

First, each student chose a Native symbol, such as an acorn, tipi or turtle. They traced the symbol on white paper and transferred the image to a 4X6-inch block of wood. Now, after demonstrating that they digested safety lessons on equipment usage, has come the fun part: burning the symbol onto the wood. It takes a steady hand and a thoughtful mind, bolstered by Miller's ("Excellence over perfection!") coaching and assistance of parent-volunteer Edith Desmarais.

### The Art of Involvement

The woodburning project has taken place over several weeks. Recently, Colleen Finnegan and her colleague, Arts Education Coordinator Tonya Rodzach, visited Miller's classroom. Both say they were awed by the students' work and delighted to see how well the grant money is being spent.

"I am very impressed by the visual eloquence of the students' designs," relates Rodzach. "They understand the symbols they are using and creating interesting compositions on the wood. Each piece is unique and beautiful."

She notes, "Our Arts Office program is made even better because each school matches their grant. That way, the school community becomes involved as well."

Finnegan agrees, saying, "Every year, we see the tremendous benefits the schools derive from our grants. It amazes me that teachers and parents can make even a small amount go so far and do so much terrific work."

### Everyone is an Artist

Back at the woodburning, student Taelor Holdcraft explains, "The work is complicated. You have to do it step by step. It teaches you patience."

While working intently on his piece, Andy Goh earnestly reports, "I picked a symbol that means happy, because I want to be

happy.”

Amy Miller bases her teaching on a core belief: “Everyone is an artist.” Thanks to her enthusiastic faith in her students and to a supportive City, in this classroom, those words burn true.

