



AMY ROBBINS adds her small bowl with lid to a growing collection of handbuilt and thrown clay pottery. Students shaped a variety of articles with the help of volunteers from The Franklin Square Pottery Studio in Southport.

Staff Photos by Susan Usher



TAR HEEL JUNIOR HISTORIAN John Nichols, a South Brunswick Middle School eighth-grader, pours freshly pressed apple cider for Rachel Smith (foreground) and other Leland Middle School students.



"DOES ANYONE KNOW how to tie a slip knot?" asks Community Schools Coordinator Linden Mathews-Boone Thursday as she and partner Paul Latta teach the practical art of broom-tying to Leland Middle School eighth-graders.



FACE STRAINING with the effort of cutting through a log, Kelvin Cobb handles one end of a two-man saw.

Volunteers Enjoy 'Heritage Days' As Much As County Eighth-Graders

BY SUSAN USHER

For the third consecutive day, 78-year-old Eva Mae Knox sat in the sun on a hard, backless bench, weaving pine needle baskets for an audience of energetic eighth-grade students.

She loved every minute of it. "Isn't this a beautiful place?" she asked, gesturing toward the Cape Fear River as she paused in her work. "Everybody talks about the youth today, but there's a lot of promise in them. It's up to us to help bring it out."

She was doing her part. A retired schoolteacher with 40 years of classroom experience at Bolivia, Leland and Sunset Park schools, Mrs. Knox said she "thoroughly enjoyed" teaching and never wanted to do anything else. Today she's still nurturing growing things—plants rather than children—operating Lanvale Nursery with her husband. Mrs. Knox had participated in Colonial Days, a three-day living history program for the general public, for two consecutive falls. Her pine needle baskets are sold at the site gift shop, along with lye soap and pottery made during the living history programs.

Last week, however, was the first time she joined other volunteers for Heritage Days, a similar three-day program offered with the county schools as part of the social studies curriculum for eighth-graders. The program is now in its third year under the direction of Community Schools Coordinator Linden Mathews Boone and Brunswick Town Site Manager William Faulk.

"Gee, I'm sorry I missed it," Mrs. Knox said of the earlier programs. "I'm so glad I could do it this year. It has just lifted up my spirits."

"It's done so much for me. I'm so glad they asked," she said, winking in a way that made the recipient feel special, an intimate part of the action. "I've seen children of children I used to teach."

Her generous, loving nature and listening ear had a telling effect on the hundreds of youngsters who visited her worksite last Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. They knew she cared.

Thursday afternoon as the students from Leland Middle School headed back to their caravan of blue activity buses, they sent Principal Clara Carter back to the waterfront with a special message for Mrs. Knox.

"You've been a big hit with my students," Mrs. Carter told the craftswoman as she invited her to visit the school on a future date. "They sent me back to tell you that."

Thursday was the last day of the three-day effort. South Brunswick Middle School students visited Tuesday, Shallotte Middle and Waccamaw students on Wednesday and Leland Middle students on Thursday.

It was hard to tell who was enjoying Heritage Days most last Thursday—the students or the volunteers like Mrs. Knox who served them.

"This has been a lot of fun," volunteer Victoria Nance said as she showed students how to dip their candlewicks into hot, colored wax, one at a time with a pause for dripdrying in between. "She (Ellen Dorsett) taught me how Tuesday morning just before the students arrived and now I'm teaching them!"

Most of the crafts taught last week had a decorative aspect—the baskets were pretty and the candles smelled good—but they also had practical household uses.

In the colonies, Mrs. Dorsett said, candlemaking was a task of several weeks' duration usually assigned to the oldest daughter. "If she didn't do a good job, they didn't have light during the winter," Mrs. Dorsett added. For the Brunswick Town programs volunteers use whatever materials they can find for the candles, soliciting dona-



HER OBVIOUS LOVE FOR THEM made Eva Mae Knox a "hit" among Leland students as she quietly wove pine needle baskets on a bench overlooking the Cape Fear River.

tions of partially-burned candles with wax and/or wick that can be recycled, old wax Christmas decorations and even the thin layers of paraffin used to seal jelly jars, she said.

It's a process almost as time-consuming as the collection of wax myrtle or bayberries might have been in colonial days. Once, Mrs. Dorsett said, she attempted making candles from the berries themselves with limited success. After collecting a six-quart pot full of the tiny berries, she still didn't get enough wax for a candle and the product was too impure to harden properly.

"I got the smell, the color, but not the candle," she said.

Beeswax and the refined fat of animals—tallow—also provided candlemaking materials for early settlers, she said.

The youngest volunteers were members of the Tar Heel Junior History Club at South Brunswick Middle School, working in rotating shifts of three each day. Kristy Blackmon, John Nichols and Greg Cumbee worked Thursdays, while Tanya Hall, Michell Martin, Robbie Ballentine, Heath Babson, Gina Chardon and Marcie

Boswell took turns earlier in the week, Mrs. Mathews-Boone indicated.

Students were introduced to the Stamp Act rebellion in Brunswick Town through a scene between Royalist Gov. William Tryon (Assistant Site Manager Jim Bartley) and a colonist seeking eimages in the tax laws (portrayed by Mark Munden, assistant site manager at the sister historical site at Fort Fisher).

Afterwards students rotated through a series of work stations staffed by volunteers as well as site employees. Staff member Brian Howell coordinated the woodworking demonstration, while Virginia Lloyd and fellow members of the Woodbine Garden Club of Southport demonstrated colonial cooking over indoor and outdoor fires. They also replanted an herb garden at the site.

Other volunteers not mentioned above included Rev. Pearl West of Zion United Methodist Church, who demonstrated the dulcimer; Mary Earp of Winnabow, who made grapevine wreaths and baskets; staff member Brenda Marshburn, who demonstrated natural dyeing methods; Cathi Small, lye soapmaking; and elementary school supervisor Diane Van Nortwick, color stenciling.

Ms. Mathews-Boone said she was very pleased with the outcome of this year's program, citing excellent weather, model behavior by students, and a smoothly-run operation. "Maybe it takes three years for everything to come together," she said, as she began discussing the improvements already proposed for next spring.



ROBERT WOODY hurries the drying process along as he dips his first wax candle during Heritage Days at Brunswick Town.