

Penland Line

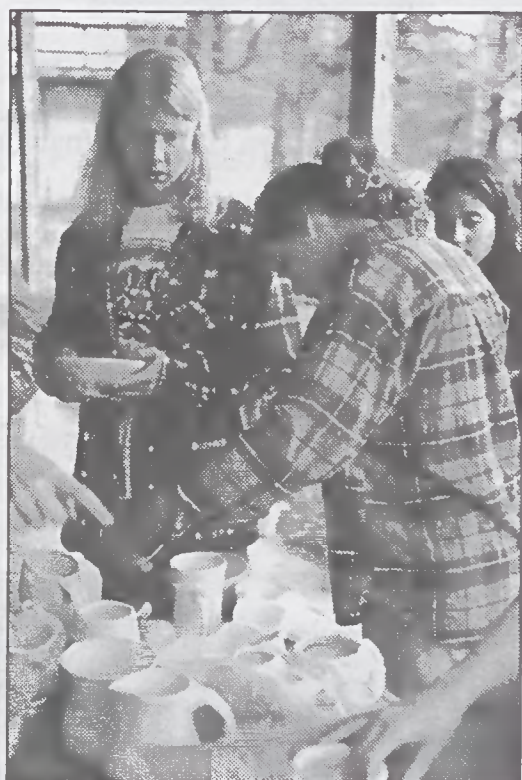
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Penland Reaches Out

"Support for arts education is dwindling at the very time when the arts are being recognized as essential to an integrated curriculum," says Penland director Ken Botnick. "This makes it vital for institutions like Penland to support educators. We want our studios to be a resource for local schools, which have very little funding for the arts, and we want to help educators in our region develop new ways of teaching." While intensive craft classes continue to be the core of Penland's program, new initiatives, mostly centered around the role of craft in education, are broadening the use of the school's resources and giving Penland new avenues for reaching out to the community.

An important part of this effort was a special class offered this summer which gave craft instruction directly to school teachers. Resident Artist **Meg Peterson** has spent years learning to use craft as a medium for teaching a range of subjects to children. Her work was the genesis of the class, which she taught with **Cindy Boughner**, who



High school ceramics students unloading pots at the Penland clay studio.

runs an experimental high school in Michigan. Participating in the class were ten Mitchell County school teachers as well as others from around the region. For two weeks Penland's book studio was used not only to teach craft skills but as a forum on the art of teaching. Portions of the class were taught by nationally known educators **Bill Daley** and **Richard Lewis**, as well as former Penland Resident **Debra Frasier**. (See page 3 for more information about this exciting class.)

A new program under development will offer craft instruction with a direct tie to other high school curricula. Ken Botnick and **Bill Sears**, who is assistant superintendent of the Mitchell County Schools, worked with local craftspeople and Mitchell High science teachers to devise ways of using craft as part of science education. "We are looking at the practical application of scientific concepts, mainly chemistry and physics, in the real world," said Bill. Ken explains it this way: "These are projects which will allow students to get a sense of

how materials behave and then learn to predict what they will do under different conditions; this is basic science and it's going on all the time in our studios."

Underneath this is the broadening use of Penland's resources. "Our intention is to strengthen the links between your school and our school and the community," said Bill. "We've had tremendous cooperation and the spirit and enthusiasm has been unbelievable; I think we're on to something." The basic plan for this curriculum is in place, a chemistry class has already visited Penland, and the school is exploring funding sources for the project. The long-range goal is to test the concept here and then make it available to other schools with access to craft studios.

Several programs have brought newcomers into the studios this year. An open house at the glass shop gave many of our neighbors a chance to play with this fascinating material. and **Dimitri Michaelides** opened up his spring glass class to a bus load of Mitchell County children.

In May, eighteen high schoolers from Orlando, FL spent four days at Penland working in the clay studio and visiting local artists. These students attend a public school whose art department includes an amazingly comprehensive clay program. (Core student **Michael Hunt** is a graduate of this school.) The visit gave these motivated teenagers a look at crafts that would be hard to get anywhere else. "We can make pots at home," explained their teacher, **Mike Lalone**, "but Penland is a community of craftspeople. It was so valuable for

"Craft practice entails a myriad of disciplines and thought processes. These are important tools of growth and learning whether you are a child in school or an adult seeking meaningful work."



Dino and Dimitri Michaelides during a demonstration for Mitchell County elementary school students.



An exciting class for teachers turned the book studio into a forum on art and education.

our students to meet the artists around Penland and see people who are making their living this way. It's important for them to know that places like this exist."

Another educational experiment is directed at low- and middle-income residents of Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties. A collaboration between Penland and Mayland Community College, this program offers business classes and craft instruction with an eye toward creating new employment opportunities.

After a thirty-hour orientation, students are given the opportunity to enroll in Penland classes and in Mayland's entrepreneurship curriculum, which covers information needed to produce a plan for a small business. The idea is to give people skills which will make them valuable employees in local studios or, if they pursue further training, might lead to self-employment in crafts.

Scholarships have been made available through a state/federal grant developed by *Handmade in America*, which seeks to assist and promote craft-based business in Western North Carolina. After the first orientation this summer, five students have continued with the program. In addition to the Mayland curriculum, they are enrolled in current or upcoming concentration classes and several will be working individually with Penland artists this winter.

Although this project focuses on employment, the transforming potential of craft work is clearly one of its goals. "Craft practice entails a myriad of disciplines and thought processes," says Ken. "These are important tools of growth and learning whether you are a child in school or an adult seeking meaningful work."

In addition to programs already planned or under way, the school is exploring several other partnerships which will bring new groups of people to Penland or will use our studios as labs for educational innovation. "News of this effort has spread and is catching attention in all sorts of places," said Ken. "I expect that this will lead to some extraordinary outcome over the next few years." ✻

The first day to register for summer classes is January 15.