



BEN LEDBETTER / THE HERALD

West Elementary fourth grade teacher Amy Johnson tells her class about Raleigh, the first destination for the class's ram.

Traveling Ram

West students learn about NC by mailing Tar Heels' mascot

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

West Elementary School fourth grade teacher Amy Johnson has found a way to teach her students about North Carolina history and it doesn't involve textbooks.

Johnson is using a stuffed University of North Carolina ram. Her class wanted to mail it Tuesday and to help get it to Raleigh was Kings Mountain postman Jerry Clontz.

Participating in the activity are Johnson's and Gwen Whisnant's fourth grade classes.

The idea came to Johnson from reading.

"Really I got the idea out of a magazine," she said. "A teacher had sent a teddy bear around the world. She would leave it in a public place with a little note asking somebody to pick it up and learn about it that way."

With the fourth grade studying North Carolina in Social Studies, Johnson thought of a few variations of the activity which included sending the ram around the state.

The activity is going to last all year long and Johnson said she hopes to see pictures with the ram plus historical and other information about the town. "Anything important

around their town - population, anything - they're sending it," Johnson said. "We're just leaving it up to them and we're going to learn about North Carolina that way."

During part of Tuesday's class, Johnson asked students what they knew about Raleigh, the first destination for the ram.

"Well, Raleigh is the place they get together and make these laws," Johnson said to her class.

The state fair was also mentioned by students.

Other destinations for the ram include Wilmington, Asheville and Winston-Salem.

Johnson said, while she uses textbooks as supplements, she prefers doing other hand activities.

She tries to do that for other subject areas such as science.

"Everything, science, we do experimental learning and stuff like that instead of out of a textbook," she said.

The textbook is used more as a supplement, she said.

Although there are no texts involved with the activity Johnson said the students will have to complete projects such as making cups using the information they learned. Students will also turn in a notebook at the end of the year.

Jean Harris and Mrs. George Thomasson and great-great grandson of recently deceased Elizabeth G. Arthur, all of Kings Mountain.

KINGS MOUNTAIN PEOPLE Basket making Eskridge's speciality

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

Before she starts a class, Lynn Eskridge likes to read from a statement.

The statement talks about the historical importance of baskets and that the craft was universal among ancient civilizations.

While she teaches basket making classes now, a class she took in the 1970's is what got her hooked on the craft. That was when Eskridge took a Navajo weaving class.

"I may have always been interested in weaving of some kind," she said. "But that was one of the first encounters that I had with hands-on weaving."

Although she took classes in the 1970's, Eskridge made her first basket in 1983.

The first basket she made was an Appalachian egg basket and she said while it was difficult, something about it was interesting.

"Something about it touched me," she said. "I really enjoyed doing it so I just kept on with it."

For a time, finding others that made baskets was hard. She did have a place to buy supplies though.

After reading a book and teaching herself a few steps, Eskridge got interested in making white oak baskets.

To learn more about that she took classes about making the baskets at a folk school near Murphy.

Closer to home, Eskridge will be teaching a class Monday and Tuesday at the Cleveland County Arts Center in Shelby, where she also volunteers.

The process involved with white oak baskets involves cutting a tree in halves, quarters, eighths and separating the growth rings. Then one has to scrape the wood to make it flexible enough to make a basket.

Eskridge would not take the easy way in making a basket.

"It's pretty labor intensive and it's a lot more satisfying than ordering your materials and making the basket," she said.

Starting the basket making process from the tree is a traditional way of making baskets in the Appalachian Mountains, she said.

Appalachian inhabitants used materials they had handy and Eskridge said she also likes to use different materials to experiment.

Eskridge is not making a living with her baskets but said it serves as a creative outlet.

Working with her hands and having something to show for her time is one of things she said is rewarding about it.

"If I sit down for an



Lynn Eskridge works on a basket

evening and watch tv, I really can't do that. I get real antsy if I'm not doing something with my hands. I guess that's how I relax too."

She has two areas she uses primarily for her work - in the garage and a cabin in the backyard of her home.

When she works in her cabin, she has to haul water to keep the reeds moist.

Through the classes she took in the mountains, she was able to find different people and learn about basket makers in other areas too.

"You're exposed to different styles and different ways to make material," she said. "Although there's a basic way to do the materials, you learn tips and new ways to make the job easier."

Even working with artists of different mediums can cause one to learn something different.

"Like anything, when you start interacting with other artists and people even that work in different mediums, you're going to learn something," she said. "And you're going to take away something that you might incorporate into a basket."

Jeff Miller earns Eagle Scout Award

Jeff Miller of Burlington recently received the Eagle Scout Award. He is a member of Troop 126, sponsored by Brookwood Baptist Church in Burlington.

He has held the offices of senior patrol leader, troop scribe, and troop bugler. He belongs to the Order of Arrow.

He is a member of the National Honor Society and the recipient of the Mu Alpha Theta mathematics award.

His Eagle Scout project was to build retaining wall steps to replace a collapsed bridge and four wood duck boxes at The Cedar Rock Park.

He is the son of Art and Aileen Miller and the grandson of Winston and Peggy Miller and Thomas Heritage, all of Burlington. He is the nephew of Mrs.

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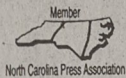
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Page 3C