

# Special Edition

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Special News About Special People

Free of Charge

## Karyn's & Nita's Groups

### Shop

*At this age, your children are working to find the intersection between possibility and capability, between the seemingly infinite possibilities they see when they team their rich imaginations with the Shop's available resources and the level of development they have attained in their manual woodworking abilities. Plans for twin-engine planes and library buildings are revamped as model aircraft and bookcases with only a momentary sense of disappointment before the modified blueprints are embraced with enthusiasm. Their successes in this smaller scale work will help them accrue the skills necessary to bring those more lofty plans closer to reach.*

**Geography and sustainable forestry** may not be the first things that come to mind when thinking of elementary school children engaging in woodworking, but they found their place in your children's Shop curriculum this past month. Revisiting the work we had done when many of these children were in preschool, we established that wood comes from trees, that the majority of wood we use comes from pine trees and what kind of animals and insects live in, on or among pine trees. We talked about why we use pine. Pine is softwood which makes it easy to saw, shape and nail through. Pine grows relatively quickly and is grown primarily by lumber companies who practice sustainable forestry, planting and harvesting trees in methodic cycles. Pine is grown in the United States where government and private organizations regulate and enforce sustainable practices so that ecosystems and animal habitats are not permanently disrupted or destroyed.

We can determine where the pine we buy comes from based on the lumber identification stamps used by these organizations. We can favor buying pine that was grown relatively close to us over lumber grown in distant states to minimize the environmental impact of transporting the wood to our local stores. We can avoid buying unmarked wood as it may have come from regions of the world where the lumber industry is not well regulated and where it may have been harvested solely for profit without regard to the surrounding ecosystem.

We used the shop's supply of lumber and the identification stamps on them to determine where the wood had been grown.

#### Example



SPIB-◀ This mark told us that the wood was inspected by the Southern Pine Inspection Bureau which inspects a large portion of the lumber cut and milled in the southern

United States. We used a map to locate this region.

**771**◀ This mark allowed us to identify the mill where it was cut, dried and graded. Knowing that lumber companies mill their trees as close as possible to the cut site to save transportation costs, we could be reasonably sure that the wood came from trees grown near Troy, Virginia. A look at our map showed the relatively short distance this mill was from our local lumber suppliers as opposed to lumber milled in the northwest states which bore different markings.

We concluded by talking about the opportunity to buy other kinds of goods locally to reduce the environmental costs associated with bringing them to market.

**In Karyn's Group**, Adam began his year in Shop making a Skee-ball style marble game from commercial plans. Since completing his miniature midway game, Adam has been fabricating a canjo, a one-stringed fretted instrument.

Addison transformed what started as a scrap wood "Transformer" into a mail holder with the aid of a coping saw, chisels and files before filling the fantasy airwaves with chatter on a play walkie-talkie. Addison is currently finishing up a rubber band powered river boat drawn from project book plans.

Casey worked to make a whistle but, at my request, refrained from whistling while she worked on subsequent projects as the one note woodwind proved capable of filling the shop with sound. With a commemorative plaque for a fallen hermit crab, an "earring holder" and a doll bed since completed, Casey is using a coping saw to cut out a three piece bulldog figurine.

David expressed an interest in making a full-sized model sheep as his inaugural Shop project. When I suggested making a model of the model first to work out the details, David happily set to work with chisels, files and a coping saw to shape the ovine's body, then used a bench plane to create curlicues that he then nailed and glued on to serve as the sheep's wool coat. David has since been using a coping saw and scrap wood to create elements for a miniature skate park.

Forest did a great job finishing up the canjo he began crafting last March and has most recently been working from project book plans on a model racing boat which is giving him plenty of practice with proper vise setup and honing his skills with a coping saw.

Hannah has used her time in the shop to design and begin sawing out the plywood elements of an enclosed set of shelves (think armoire) in which to store her American Girl® doll clothes (think haute couture).

Jane completed her own doll accoutrement ensemble to start the year, finishing the cradle that now complements the table and chairs and clothes rack she drew up plans for and created last fall. The design for a wooden belt in one of the shop's project books currently has Jane working at the manual miter saw and drill press to create its elements.

Keenan returned to the shop to find the live-axle truck body he had pieced together last spring waiting for completion. He worked with me at the drill press to make wheels and axle holes, then completed the vehicle with a pair of 1/4" dowel axles. Keenan has since moved on to the fabrication of a canjo.

The stuffed duck house is done!!!! Just under a year in the making, Margaret was thrilled beyond words to finish her plush plaything's new quarters. Margaret has since wasted no time getting started on a walkie-talkie, no doubt to make sure that the good news can be spread to those lacking both cell phones and land lines.

Matteo is reveling in the opportunities the Shop program is providing him to engage in real work. Matteo is also doing the important work of coming to terms with what real work entails and is building his patience and perseverance with each new scrap wood assemblage.

Nathan liked the looks of the three piece bull dog figurine that classmate, Casey, has since signed on to create and used his initial periods in Shop to carefully trace and saw out the parts of the interlocking canine. A big fan of the thaumatropes and thaumatrope track I built several years ago for a May Fair and keep on display in the shop, Nathan is currently replicating the simple structure so he can enjoy the persistence of vision toys at home.

Last May Sydney saw an illustration for a pair of hanging shelves in a project book and decided the design would serve well as doll bunk beds. Having completed the project to start her year, Sydney is now working from plans in another idea book in creating a small elephant on wheels.

Vaughn practically dove into the scrap box during her first Shop class of the year and has since occasionally resurfaced to show me the results of her labors. After a few false starts on more formal fare, Vaughn has just completed a small bed of her own design and is currently starting work on a small table.

**In Nita's Group,** Aiden began the year finishing up a walkie-talkie he began in camp and then practiced his vise setup and coping saw skills in making a pocket fidget. Aiden has currently carried those same skills forward into his current endeavor, a project book inspired racing boat.

Last October, Alex drew up plans for a battery powered boat. With a cooling fan he had removed from a computer power supply as a means of propulsion, Alex first suggested mounting it under the boat to serve as a propeller. The electrical impracticality of this approach next found him considering mounting it on the back of the watercraft, swamp boat style. This idea eventually gave way to excising a cavity in the boat's hull and mounting the fan horizontally to create a downdraft that was then routed through two holes drilled in the stern. Trial and error have required a large number of changes and adjustments, but Alex's battery powered boat is now almost bathtubworthy.

Christian has been working since last March on a hockey net. Now well versed in the use of the manual miter saw, the cordless drill, a ratcheting hand brace mounted with a screwdriver bit and a variety of metal structural braces, Christian is on the home stretch of assembling the project's framework.

Last year Daniel proposed making a go-cart and I, not having any prior history with Daniel as a builder, suggested he hold off until he was a bit older. Daniel more than proved his ability to work hard and with significant independence in building a plywood house for his cats and this year he's bringing his accrued woodworking skills and stick-to-itiveness to building his gravity-driven vehicle.

Eva has demonstrated no shortage of perseverance herself, now working to complete a Brio™ style train track and turntable that she had conceived of back in '07. Eva's work has exposed her to the safe use of the drill press, lathe and plunge router as well as the challenging nature of working with limited tolerances when working on a small scale.

Jake began the year creating a pocket fidget from a nice piece of walnut before Halloween introduced his need to manufacture a credible wand of the Harry Potter variety. With a full-sized lemonade stand already among his list of woodworking accomplishments I was pleased to see Jake challenge himself again; this year in the form of a tree motif pencil holder. Jake has done a nice job of the vise setup and intensive coping saw work and has successfully weathered the setback of finding the breaking point of thin plywood.

Kai made relatively short work of completing the taxing sawing job of removing a large cartoon reindeer from its 3/4" plywood surroundings to begin the year. Kai has since drawn up plans and begun sawing out the pieces for a sizable birdhouse designed to "keep bad birds out." How Kai plans to assess the ethics of the avian individuals in his neighborhood he has yet to divulge.

Mariette is back in full swing this year having already completed a scrap wood key rack, a pair of dice and a wooden top game. Responding to a request from home, Mariette has also designed and built a functional freestanding coat rack and has just finished a classic black and white magician's wand made from a length of doweling.

Ironwood was Matteo's selected material for the pocket fidget he made to begin the year (although which of over 25 species of wood referred to by this name his specimen actually was I was unable to determine). Matteo has since brought the whole of his abilities to the building of a canjo, a task that each week seems to introduce one more step to complete before he can take the recreational instrument home.

Megan turned to ironwood for her second pocket fidget after her dog summarily ate the mahogany version she made first. Turning from her dog's dental health to her own, Megan is currently working from project book plans on a toothbrush holder.

Sam began designing and building a cargo crane during the summer of '08. Neither one of us had built one before so we referred to pictures we found on the internet (and I made some personal trips to the docks in Chester for a more comprehensive look). Basic butt joints have given way to mitered angles as Sam has worked this year to strengthen the device's superstructure and learned to trust the stability of triangles. With his project now less prone to behave like a folding chair, Sam is designing and manufacturing a winch mechanism.

Summer Camp Shop was witness to the start of Sarah's current project, a shadow box. Working from commercial plans, Sarah has used a coping saw to create the project's freeform façade and is now applying her measuring

and marking skills in preparation for cutting out the wall adornment's inner frame.

Savannah joined classmate, Mariette, in the production of scrap wood key holders during her first Shop class and then joined her brother, Davis, and several schoolmates in making a play walkie-talkie. The project is unique in the types of tools it requires to build it: the drill press to manufacture the ear and mouthpiece disks, a screwdriver to attach them, a brace and bit to create a mounting hole for the dowel antenna, and scissors and tacks to cut and attach the leather strap. Savannah is currently building a miniature ladder suggesting she has small friends in low places she's looking to support.

## *Sports*

Children at SRV are given room to explore and build upon their natural abilities, to play in a structure in which all levels of development are valued and supported. They learn that inability is a starting point for growth, and ability an opportunity to teach one another.

The Sports program and organized recess games include a rich mixture of group-building activities, competitive and cooperative games, classic and newly emerging "neighborhood" games, and physically challenging free play activities.

The program is defined by the individual groups. The younger groups and I take turns choosing activities every other week, while the Oldest Group builds their own unique curriculum from the ground up. The democratic process through which the children arrive at their decisions is as integral to the program as the athletics.

Here's the program that your children and I have crafted thus far this year:

***Ghost in the Graveyard*** – *Hide and Seek* in which seekers sound the alarm when they find the "ghost" and then try to run back home before the hiding "ghost" can tag them. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Kick the Jug*** – *Hide and Seek* in which the "it" stays close to a centrally located plastic jug. The "it" tries to catch hiders by seeing them and calling out their names as hiders try to run in and kick the jug to free previously caught hiders. *Karyn's Group*

***Ships and Sharks*** – Small groups of shipmates work cooperatively to try to "sail" their hula hoop "ships" from one port to another while keeping one another safe during "shark attacks." *Nita's Group*

***Baby in the Air*** – Combination of sprinting, *Dodgeball* and *Tag*. No babies are harmed during the playing of this game. *Karyn's Group*

***Dodgeball*** – Players try to stay in defined area and avoid being hit by thrower on outside. Hit players join ranks of throwers on outside of area until everyone is out. *Nita's Group*

***Zoo on the Loose*** – *Tag* game. Animals tag humans who in turn become more animals tagging a dwindling human population. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Doctor/Spy*** – *Team Dodgeball* style game. Teams throw soft balls from one side of gym floor at opponents on other side. Hit players or those whose throws have been caught by opponent sit down and wait to be "healed" by "Doctor" on their team. "Guard" protects "Doctor" from being hit, "Spy" can venture onto opponent's side to steal balls to throw. Round ends when "Doctor" is hit. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Tag (Blob, Hug, Tunnel)*** – In the first, tagged players hold hands to form an ever growing "it." In the second, players avoid being tagged by holding another player. In the third, tagged players stand with feet apart and are "unfrozen" by another player crawling under them. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Duck, Duck, Goose*** – Even more fun when you're older. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Simon Says*** – The classic game of auditory processing. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Look Down, Look Up*** – Seeing eye-to-eye in this game knocks you out. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Wall Climbing*** – Traverse climbing on the gym's 8'x30' climbing wall. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Sardines*** – *Hide and Seek* but seekers hide *with* found hider. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Team Dodgeball*** – Two teams throwing, catching and dodging balls. I do not recommend Ben Stiller's depiction of the sport. *Karyn's & Nita's Groups*

***Clean Up the Yard*** – Two teams vie to throw, kick, bowl, hike, and or bat the most balls onto opponent's side of the gym before "Dad" gets home. *Karyn's Group*

*Until next time,*

*Mike*