

Schechter Kids Get Tour of Museum



Kathy Glaser, a docent at the Zimmerli museum at Rutgers, shows students from Solomon Schechter Day School of Raritan Valley an illustration from a children's book.

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Benjamin Albertson, a fourth-grader at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Raritan Valley, plans to write a book about underwater adventure.

"I like stories about the ocean and adventures," said the nine-year-old from East Brunswick.

Benjamin and the other SSDS fourth-graders came to the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum on the Rutgers University campus in New Brunswick on Dec. 10 to view illustration exhibits and learn drawing techniques from professionals as they embarked on a project to write and create their own books.

Beginning in early January, the East Brunswick school will host Lena Shiffman as artist-in-residence for six weeks. Shiffman, a book illustrator and Flemington resident, will guide the youngsters as they write and illustrate a six- or seven-page book on subjects they choose.

"They will prepare their own gallery exhibit," art teacher Debra Waldman explained. "They will be learning all different styles of illustrations and integrating both writing and art in this project. In the process, we are stimulating the creative process."

Waldman, who has previously worked with the Zimmerli's education department, said this book project aims to turn the youngsters into "lovers of art."

Funding the project is the Hochstein Family Scholarship Fund, which is under the auspices of the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County (see sidebar).



Aviva Kamens, nine, of Highland Park works on an illustration.

Schechter head of school Howard Rosenblatt said developing an appreciation of the arts is an integral part of education.

"Nurturing their interest and talent I think will enhance their lives," he said. "It is part of a well-rounded education and will make them a mensch in the full sense of the word."

Inside the museum, the children were taken through its exhibit of children's book illustrations as docent Kathy Glaser explained techniques used by the artists.

As she stopped at an exhibit from the book *Trot Trot to Boston: Play Rhymes for Baby*, she showed how illustrator Catherine Stock's "beautiful" images meshed with the storyline.

In another room, they heard from curator Gail Aaron, who specializes in children's book illustrations.

Benjamin said the Zimmerli trip "gave him a lot of ideas" for his ocean adventure book. Dayna Bier, 10, of East Brunswick thought some of the exhibit's illustrations "were really cool." She said she received all kinds of useful tips for her story, which will be about someone buying a winning lottery ticket.

"I want to write a book about a moment," she said.

Funding children's learning

THE HOCHSTEIN FAMILY Scholarship Fund was established years ago by the late Joshua and Fan Hochstein. Their daughter-in-law, Sandy Linzer, and her late husband, Aaron, previously oversaw the fund, which is earmarked for arts and literature programs at Solomon Schechter Day School of Raritan Valley and to benefit the Sephardi community in Israel. The fund is now administered by the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County.

Linzer is a former Highland Park resident now living in the Clearbrook adult community in Monroe. A retired educator, she founded the early childhood school at the YM-YWHA of Raritan Valley in Highland Park.

The focus of the fund was her choice, said Linzer. "My mother-in-law was a painter and my father-in-law studied Yiddish and Hebrew and wrote for Jewish publications. He was a very learned man. I am interested in the education of Jewish children, and I knew about the Schechter school from living in Highland Park all those years."

Federation executive director Gerrie Bamira described the family as "people who loved and cared about their community."

"This is a perfect example of how someone can establish an endowment through federation in their lifetime to ensure Jewish continuity," she said.

Linzer joined the Schechter fourth-graders on their tour of the Zimmerli museum.

"I think it's wonderful for children to be exposed to something like this," she said.