

SHAPING MEMORIES IN SHELTON



Booth Hill School student Julie Lin builds the wall of her clay pot Monday during "A Day in Clay," a program led by visiting artist Cliff Mendelson and sponsored by the Booth Hill School PTA Cultural Arts Committee.

Autumn Pinette/Connecticut Post

Students delight in dirty hands

By MELVIN MASON
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The gray clay made for an unusual sensation in Claire Fox's hands.

"It feels soft and it feels really squishy," the 8-year-old said.

But Claire enjoyed molding and shaping the sticky, clumping stuff into something she will be able to keep and show off for a long time.

Claire and her classmates at Booth Hill School in Shelton got their hands a little messy this week with the help of Cliff Mendelson.

The artist guided students on how to shape the clay into American Indian-inspired pots.

The children first mashed their pieces of clay flat on their art room desks, then shaped them into sturdy bowls and used plastic butter knives, forks, beads and other tools

to create designs.

All students at Booth Hill had the chance to work with Mendelson over the past five days.

This is the second year that Booth Hill's art room has been running and the first year with a kiln that will be used to solidify the youngsters' creations.

Mendelson — who visits more than 40 schools a year — said the children always seem to take to the clay quickly. They love that they can use their hands to create a unique item.

"It's the simplest way to make pottery without a potter's wheel," Mendelson said. "It's so responsive to them and they're so excited."

Teresa Gagnon, the cultural arts director for Booth Hill's Parent Teacher Organization, delighted in seeing the kids work with the pottery.

"We hope we can have him back next year," Gagnon said.



Third-grader Alex Recker molds clay into a pot Monday. Left, Mendelson demonstrates how to use coils of clay to shape a pot.

Third-grader Gabby Rago, 8, made a pot with clay back when she was in kindergarten. She said she liked Wednesday's work with Mendelson, when she carefully pressed her fingers to shape her piece just

right.

"It's cool and I like making things, so this is fun," she said.

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CONNECTICUT POST

Wednesday — December 6, 2006