

Book project on architect proves to be good training ground for students

Drawing on history, focusing on future



Pat Bastian, who is working on animation, says he's learned to appreciate others' ideas.

By REID CHAMPAGNE
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The four Archmere senior Advanced Placement art students sat dutifully across from Jim Tevebaugh and had a good idea what was coming.

Tevebaugh, a Wilmington architect and founder of Friends of the Furness Railroad District, was spearheading a project to design, publish and distribute an activities book for first- and second-graders. The book represented Tevebaugh's twin objectives of education and keeping alive the memory and reputation of 19th- and early 20th-century architect Frank Furness.

Tevebaugh flipped through the students' designs.

"Okay," he began in an avuncular but surgically focused tone, "We're pulling these to be redone. I want this one expanded and need this done on this one."

The students quietly sat and watched as their work was picked apart as if by some New York art snob. None of the four appeared the least bit crestfallen.

"We're kind of used to it by now," said Mary Henjes. "But the critiques are good experience. And it's all been constructive."

Added Elizabeth Barr: "I have been surprised by the amount of revising I've had to do. But it's all for the good of the project."

Learning to digest and even come to expect criticism of their artwork is



From the project's conception, Jim Tevebaugh wanted Mary Henjes, 18, and her fellow classmates involved in creating the book because he was impressed by Archmere's art program. THE NEWS JOURNAL/JENNIFER CORBETT

just a small part of the larger learning experience this project has turned out to be for the four. The students' art teacher, Terry Newitt, said the project is helping the students develop a professional approach to their art.

"They're learning that poise is an important ingredient in the workplace," Newitt said. "Working inde-

pendently as well as collaboratively and meeting deadlines are important life lessons for these students to be learning at their age. I could not think of a better bridge to a professional level of work than this project."

Pat Bastian, who is focusing on animated depictions of Furness and other figures in the book, said



Orcel Kounga, 18, will edit his footage of Liz Barr, 18, and the others at work into a documentary on the making of the book which highlights architect Frank Furness.



A page is in the process of being developed by Bastian, 18.

this is the first time he's collaborated on anything involving his art.

"I've learned how to appreciate the ideas of others rather than just my own," he said.

Tevebaugh's vision for the project was to create a fun-filled opportunity for children to learn about the history of railroading in this country as well as Wilmington's place in that history. Wilmington is particularly critical to the history of Furness.

Tevebaugh's plan is to publish up to 10,000 20-page books and have them ready for free distribution in the late summer or fall.

"Amtrak will be part of the distribution network, along with schools and preschools."

The grant also includes funds to pay the Archmere artists for their work. According to Newitt, the students will split about \$2,000 for their work on the book.

That split will include the work of student videographer Orcel Kounga. After having produced a two-minute demo of what the finished work will look like, Kounga now is gathering what he estimates will be 10 hours of footage to be edited into a 12- or 15-minute documentary.

"I'm feeding strictly off what the artists are doing," Kounga said. I want the documentary to be an expression of what they want."

The activities in the book will consist of pages to be colored, word games and mazes designed to appeal to the imaginations and to challenge the minds of first- and second-graders. To help with age appropriateness for these activities, the students are consulting with an elementary-school educator.

The finished book will include photographs and biographies of the artists. "It will definitely go into the portfolio," said Bastian.

It will pair nicely with about \$500, which should just about cover the purchase of an introduction to art history textbook as college freshman next year.