

VISUAL ARTS

Gardner-Webb Ceramic Students Donate Bowls for Local Arts Fundraiser

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▲ Gardner-Webb ceramics students with Professor Doug Knotts take their pottery out of the kiln. From left, are, Chris Dover, Knotts, Bella Sherrin, Micah Zehnder and Katie Canipe.

Pottery Helps Cleveland County (N.C.) Arts Council Provide Arts Programs in Schools

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Every spring, Gardner-Webb University professor Doug Knotts requires each of his ceramic students to make 20 bowls. The repetition helps them learn and improve their technique, and the pottery is donated to the Cleveland County Arts Council for its fundraiser, “Bowling for Dollars.”

The lunchtime benefit is held during the “Treasures of the Earth Pottery Show.” Potters in the show also donate bowls for the event. Attendees are served homemade soup in a bowl they choose from all the ones that have been donated. After the meal, the bowl is theirs to keep. The money raised during the event supports the Arts Council’s Arts in Education program. This initiative brings professional artists into Cleveland County Schools, providing young people opportunities to experience arts programs.

“We’ve contributed 100 bowls for several years,” Knotts shared. “This community service project is supported by everyone in the department. It’s our way of giving back to the community.”



▲ The bowls before glazing, left, and after firing.

Recently, Knotts and a group of students worked on bowls (<https://photos.gardner-webb.edu/2022-Photos/February-2022/Pottery-and-Ceramics-class/>) for the project. While preparing to glaze her pottery, senior art major Katie Canipe talked about how the fundraiser provides art programs for her children, who attend Cleveland County Schools. When she graduates from GWU, she is going to work on her graduate certificate in teaching. “Anything we can do as artists to support arts in the schools is important,” she asserted.

Canipe took her first ceramics class at Gardner-Webb in 2020. “I really fell in love with trying to get better at things that I could make,” she reflected. “I like making functional pieces, but I just fell in love with taking a piece of clay and making it into anything. The possibilities are endless. No two pieces are going to be the same. I’m hoping once I graduate to buy my own wheel and kiln and become a local potter, and to teach art too.”

Another senior art major, Micah Zehnder, enjoyed working on the bowls for the Arts Council, but his specialty is making musical instruments. “I like three-dimensional art, and with ceramics, I can make something in one day or a few hours,” Zehnder explained. “Other 3D mediums take a lot longer. I get into a good head zone when I’m throwing; it’s really relaxing.”



▲ Bella Sherrin shapes a bowl for the fundraiser.



▲ Katie Canipe prepares a bowl for glazing.



▲ Micah Zehnder shows one of the musical instruments he's made out of clay.

Bella Sherrin, a senior psychology major, also hopes to get her own kiln and wheel when she graduates. She plans to attend graduate school and enter the field of occupational therapy. “Pottery is a stress relief for me,” she observed. “I like coming in here and spending time. Hopefully, I can incorporate this into the therapy. I want to work with children, so this would be a good activity for them. With pottery, in general, you learn patience, because you have to be patient with the clay as you go.”

Arts Council President Shearra Miller said Gardner-Webb students provide about one-third of the bowls for the fundraiser. “Without their contributions, we would not be able to sell nearly as many tickets,” she noted. “Thus, we wouldn’t be able to make as many people happy, and we wouldn’t be able to raise as much money as we do.”

Miller added that for many in the community, the event is more than a fundraiser; it’s something they look forward to every year. “They enjoy being able to get a ‘free’ bowl with the purchase of their soup lunch,” she explained. “It wouldn’t be possible without the generosity of the potters, especially the GWU students and Doug Knotts.”

“Bowling for Dollars” ([https://www.facebook.com/events/579843779807061?context=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A\[%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D\]%7D](https://www.facebook.com/events/579843779807061?context=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A[%7B%22surface%22%3A%22page%22%7D]%7D)) will be March 10 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and must be purchased in advance for a specific 30-minute time slot. Lunch is dine in or carry out. The Arts Council is located at 111 S. Washington St., Shelby, and open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, call (704) 484-2787.

Learn more about the Department of Communication, Art & Design.

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