



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

January 24, 2011

El Camino College Woodworkers Host Aspiring Craftsmen

For 26 years, Jack Selph has been teaching woodworking at El Camino College, mentoring students of various ages. During a recent lesson, Selph taught one of his youngest classes yet – a group of third-grade boys from Cub Scout Pack 860 of Hermosa Beach who were working toward their bear badge.

The visit was timed perfectly – Selph had just read an e-mail from the American Association of Woodturners announcing that noted woodworker Beth Ireland would be in the Los Angeles area. Ireland is a woodturning specialist who travels the country teaching woodturning and simple woodworking. Her artistic woodturnings have been seen in galleries throughout the United States, and her work has been featured on several TV programs.

Selph contacted Ireland who agreed to come to the ECC campus and lead an action-packed Saturday morning workshop. With help from den leader Ed Hoffman, parents, and volunteers from the El Camino College Woodturners Guild, each scout had the opportunity to make a pen and a whistle to take home.

“We had such a great time; I am not sure who was more excited to try the woodturning – the adults or the kids,” said Selph, who became an instructor after running his own successful cabinetry business for many years. “Beth was really able to get the kids’ attention so they could make their own piece, then they were able to turn around and teach their parents how to use the equipment. It was really a lot of fun.”

Den Leader Hoffman said the workshop was an outstanding activity for the youngsters and the adults, especially the hands-on aspect of the visit.

“I think what the boys liked most about their time in the shop was that everyone participated in the project,” said Hoffman. “They did it all themselves and they walked out of there with their own carved wood pieces that they made. They were really excited about that.”

“Everyone at El Camino College did a great job helping us with this – everything was very accessible and there were plenty of people to help us. They were well prepared and the whole thing was smartly done.”

The woodworking program at El Camino College has grown from five to 150 students in the past decade. Graduates from the program have been employed to do intricate, high-end woodworking for such companies as Long Beach-based Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation, John Hall Designs in Beverly Hills and Cactus Cabinets in Lawndale. Other students enjoy woodworking as a hobby.

“I can’t tell you how fortunate I feel that our students have a strong desire to be here,” Selph said. “This is such a great job – the interest is always there. And when I can teach younger students, either high school students in the summer, or the Boy Scouts, that’s just a great opportunity for me to introduce woodworking at a young age.”

In addition to the academic program, the El Camino College Woodturners Guild includes about 70 extremely active members who attend meetings on a regular basis and turn out magnificent pieces, from lamps to vases. Guild members also support the Los Angeles Maritime Institute (LAMI) TopSail Youth Program in San Pedro, a program that provides character-building sail-training adventures for youth. Guild members created many components of the LAMI classic sailing vessels that take children out to sea. Members now turn out replacement parts, and spend time making candle holders, toy boats, and other items from scrap wood to sell as a LAMI fundraiser.