



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRITZ FUNK

It's a go: Youths in a boat-building class taught by Fritz Funk, right, paddle their canoes on Twin Lakes.

Building canoes and self-esteem

Elementary school students make, launch boats for school project

By ANN CHANDONNET
THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

"An hour here and there" over a month of classes resulted in a project that could be launched and paddled for Juneau Community Charter School's fourth, fifth and sixth graders.

Four colorful, 12-foot, double-paddle canoes, one from each "table group" of students, floated first June 10 in the pool formed by Gold Creek at Cope Park and then June 11 in Twin Lakes.

"It was really fun," said Jane

Hartle, 10, a student in Lorrie Heagy's grades 4-6 class. "I liked that we could launch them after we were done. And it was nice of Fritz to give his time for us."

Local boatbuilder Fritz Funk led the project over a month's time - sometimes in an empty room upstairs at the school, and in the parking lot when the sun was shining.

"I got to learn how to build a boat using only hand tools," said Keegan Goodell, 10. "Paddling around Twin Lakes was really fun."

Keegan's table group painted its boat blue and plans to add red flames to the bow.

"The project is about a lot more

than just boatbuilding," Funk said. "The kids are building self-esteem along with their boats, and the project ties into a lot of other parts of the curriculum."

Each boat was comprised of three main plywood pieces, yet had sleek lines. The boats are assembled flat, then wrapped around molds that give them their shape. "They're very pretty," said parent volunteer Greg Chaney, a planner with the city of Juneau.

"Fritz developed this design primarily to be easy for children of this age group (grades 4 to 6). He simplified design features so that construction could be done flat on the floor with bronze shipbuilding

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Making sure it will float: Students from Juneau Charter School work on a handmade canoe as part of a boat-building class taught by Fritz Funk.

Boats...

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nails. Hammering flat on the floor makes things easier," Chaney said.

"Fritz went to a lot of effort to select glues that were non-toxic but would still work. I was really impressed with his design and that's part of the reason I volunteered to help. I was impressed by how much the kids could do," Chaney said.

Last year, Charter school students received an Alaska Science and Technology Foundation grant to study the Gold Creek watershed. Using locally-cut Sitka spruce helped to integrate boatbuilding with this study. Funk also included in work sessions information about how the forest of Southeast Alaska are linked to the ocean by the nutrients that returning salmon bring

upstream. In other words, Funk said, they learned that in part, "their boats are made of salmon."

In addition to forest ecology, Funk worked into the boatbuilding project song in the form of sea shanties, drama through the shipwreck scene from Shakespeare's "The Tempest," mathematics in the trigonometry of the hull shape, boating safety, marlinespike seamanship and survival skills.

As a result, Aldyn Brudie, 10, learned a song called "The Matthew" about emigrating to America and learned always to wear a life jacket on the water.

"I liked painting our boat red, putting the chine log on and launching," Brudie said. The chine log helps to secure the juncture of the bottom and one of the sides of a boat; it is both glued and nailed, Chaney said.

Funk has been boatbuilding with kids for several years, but the charter school project was the first time he worked with a generic school class. Usually, he works with kids who have expressed a specific interest in boatbuilding.

"This (19 kids) is the largest group I have built with so far," Funk said. "I wrote a grant proposal for the project, which was not funded so I just donated the materials myself to make it happen. It was incredibly rewarding."

"A few of the kids were very shy about paddling, but given a few minutes quiet time with the boat in a safe situation, had the paddling figured out," he said.

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me endangered. Also, heed caution out potential hazards like avalanche

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for lupine and shooting stars on river you start the trail, before reaching the runway. As you turn the corner just the float plane basin, the edge of the s will be filled with a succession of stars, lupine, Indian rhubarb, and a lit-banks of fireweed.

Sailing...

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"I just wanted to see what it was like to be out in the channel in smaller boats," said Kelly Dore, 13, who has sailed with her father on a 40-footer.

"I always liked sailing and seeing boats out in the water and wanted to do it," said Tess Cannon, 12.

Her classmate, Sara Cohen, 12, joked, "I thought it would be fun to

apply for grants for capital improvements, but we try to pay our own way with fees," Skaggs said.

"Our ultimate goal is to have some small keel boats," he said.

Classes began June 11 and will run through Aug. 10. Sailing is an interesting way to conquer the usual routine of walks to the cruise ship dock and trips to the library and the mall. As Katelyn Thomson, 13, put it, "I wanted to try something new because I don't usually do anything in the summer."

To be accepted into a class, ap-