

NOR-CAL WOODTURNERS YOUTH TRAINING PROGRAM –How it all started

By Ted Young

After retiring and moving to Sacramento, I felt a desire to do something for society by helping high school students. I contacted schools and offered to volunteer in their wood shops, but learned that there were no more wood shops and no volunteers because of liability issues. I didn't give up looking for other opportunities to be a resource to young folks. I was inspired by articles in the AAW Journal describing successful wood turning training projects with high school youth – something I really wanted to do. In the spring of 2011, we submitted a proposal to the Sacramento County Office of Education and were pleasantly surprised to find that they were interested. We met with Carol Johnston, the Curriculum Specialist, and Lauren Roth, Principal of the Palmiter School who was excited to bring the program to her school. The rest is history. The Nor-Cal board approved the plan and 16 members volunteered to teach and coach the students at Palmiter High School for a summer program in July. The first session was on Friday, July 8, and continued for four Fridays in July. Our proposal was to bring four lathes to the school and train four students with a teacher and 4 coaches, one at each lathe. In preparation for the training, Don Hendricks, Craig Millliron and I checked out the lathes and tools, and rearranged the trailer to accommodate four lathes. We prepared the lesson and wood blanks. Craig brought the trailer with all the equipment to the school.

Session 1

The teacher was Dan Clark and the coaches were John DePiazza, Chris Smith, Don Hendricks, and Ben Richardson. We got there early and set up the lathes, waiting for our four students, not knowing how popular we were! At 9 AM, 12 students arrived for the training accompanied by their teachers. A quick huddle and change of plans – instead of one student per lathe, we had three students taking turns at each lathe.

None of the students had a clue about woodturning before the class, but were very excited about it after the first exercise – turning coves and beads. Dan explained the theory and gave a short demonstration. The students went to their assigned lathe and proceeded to turn under the supervision of the coach. They rotated time on the lathe and learned the basic spindle turning skills. They were very proud of their accomplishment and showed off their bead and cove stick proudly. John was creative and had his students turn a candle stick. The next exercise showed how beads and coves are used to make a functional object. Since one of their classes is in

Horticulture, we introduced “How to make a dibble”, a conical tool used for making holes in the soil to plant bulbs, seeds and seedlings. One group completed a dibble by the end of the day. We decided to continue the next session and have every student take a dibble home. During the week, volunteers sharpened the tools and prepared the blanks for session 2.

Session 2

Dan and Norm brought their own lathes and we had 9 students on 6 lathes. Session two volunteers were Dan Clark, Norm Hinman, Bill Mundy, Clair Daugherty, Ben Richardson, Don Hendricks, Craig Milliron, John DePiazza, and Ted young. The students were able to complete the dibbles and other projects of their choice.

Session 3

In response to the student enthusiasm, four members (Norm, Bill, Craig and Hank) brought their own lathes, so we had 8 lathes set up for pen turning. We had sufficient equipment, coaches and supplies to enable Lauren Roth (principal) and Kevin Jordan (teacher) to make pens and experience the same joy as their students.

A KCRA reporter arrived and videoed the new woodturners at work on their pens, and then interviewed faculty, coaches, and students. Everyone completed a pen and showed them off to the camera and their peers, with comments such as, *the pens are awesome*, and *you can't have mine*. The segment aired on August 7.

Session 4

On Friday, July 29, the fourth and final session of the youth training summer program at Palmiter High School wrapped up with a BBQ for the school staff, students and Nor-Cal Volunteers. You can judge the success of the program from these facts. We were invited to stop work and go for the food. NO ONE budged. The students wanted to finish their projects, and the coaches were happy to stay and help them. We finally went for the BBQ, and two students who returned after lunch to finish their projects stayed until the last minute, when their bus was pulling out. The principal received a call from a student in tears because her bus did not pick her up, so she is missing woodturning. Today's project was a dry flower vase or weed pot. Some students didn't want to make a vase, and instead made magic wands. Every student was proud of his/ her accomplishments and showed them off to their peers.

We had special guests, Superintendent David Gordon and Assistant Superintendent Tim Taylor, who were anxious to see what had captured the enthusiasm of the students. They want to continue the program during the school year.

A total of 15 Club members participated in the youth training project at Palmiter High School. They are Dan Clark, Clair Daugherty, Terry Heart, Deb Heart, Don Hendricks, Norm Hinman, Craig Milliron, Bill Mundy, John DePiazza, Gerald Pierce, Ben Richardson, Chris Smith, Gerry Thomas, Hank Wilson, and Ted Young. All together, these members contributed over 130 man hours to this community service.