

Check Out Teen Open Studio at The Art Room in Lafayette

By Jean Follmer



Pictured left to right: Gi Gi Voris, Gemma Davies, Anya Rogala, Valerie Margerum, Shauna Brown, Gabby Lichtig, Emma Netland, Kay Vannelli

Photo Jean Vollmer

The Art Room has done business in Lafayette for ten years. Located on Lafayette Circle (across from Chow), it offers a variety of art instruction to ages 4 through adults. Classes are offered at the studio and enrichment classes are available at many local schools. A recent Friday afternoon found owner Gi Gi Voris teaching her Teen Open Studio class. The class ranged from 8th graders at Stanley to seniors at Acalanes and many have been going to The Art Room for years.

Voris assigns at least one project for each of the 6-week sessions. Beyond that, students are encouraged to explore new mediums and work on projects that interest them. The class is a “freeform, open class.” Voris is there for guidance and assistance and her approach with the teens is relaxed. “They know where everything is,” says Voris, and there are teenage supplies “that the little kids don’t get to use.”

The students openly expressed their feelings about Voris and The Art Room. “It’s the best class in the world,” said Acalanes Junior Gabby Lichtig. Emma Netland, also an Acalanes Junior, is the Arts Editor for the Acalanes Blueprint. An Art Room student since the 6th grade, Emma says, “It’s a little art room family. I love it.”

Freshman Gemma Davies agreed, saying, “I like that she (Voris) will give you advice about expressing yourself. It’s a place where you can do your own stuff,” while getting input as you need it.

Two students indicated an interest in art-related careers. While painting a panda, freshman Shauna Brown said she might go into fashion design. Senior Kay Vannelli is a finalist in the Bay Area Flowers Heritage Foundation high school art competition. She works on “paper cutouts” and one of them was entered in the AIDS awareness competition. Kay has attended The Art Room since 4th grade and likes it because, “It’s a very relaxed atmosphere.” She plans to go to art school for college.

Voris takes great pride in this class and in the rest of the offerings at her school. She runs The Art Room because she “loves art.” It’s far from a job to her, but her hobby and her passion. This is quickly evidenced by the first walk through the door. It’s inviting, it’s warm and it’s uniquely Lamorinda. For more information, visit www.theart-room.com.