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Giving Back While Building Skills

By Cathy Tyson



Students from the first and second period wood technology class gather around their Make-A-Wish chair. Teacher Michele Murphy stands to the right of the group. Photo Cathy Tyson

sequential order. Murphy took woodshop in high school and enjoyed it, back when it was a rarity for a girl to be in the class. "Title IX changed all that," she said. A woodworking teacher for 25 years now, Murphy has spent the last four of those years at Stanley.

"Girls are very comfortable in this class and encourage other girls to take it. We have 21st century technology at Stanley that is a true representation of what the industry uses. This exposure to CAD, CNC and powerful machinery can lead to so many different career paths. They learn about engineering, programming, creative arts, mathematics, carpentry and wood working," said the instructor. "Most importantly they are so proud of their work."

To understand the bigger picture and limitless possibilities of the field, Murphy took the students on a field trip to Autodesk in San Francisco to explore the amazing world of innovative design. The company is a leader in engineering, 3D design and entertainment software that is used in everything from architecture to manufacturing to media and beyond. Students reported back that it was "really cool" and "fun."

Looking around the organized, massive classroom filled with wood, band saws, miter saws and the very impressive ShopBot - a tool for cutting, carving, drilling or machining all kinds of things based on computer designs - the support that the community has provided to keep the wood technology class thriving is apparent. Judging by the engaged kids who claim this is their favorite class, the investment seems to be paying off.

The sturdy chair just needs a bit more sanding, stain and varnish to be ready for its debut. Once complete, it will be on display in the school's library.

Murphy has a special connection to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which grants the wish of a child diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition; her nephew was granted a wish. The wood technology kids are thrilled that they are able to help a sick child's wish come true. When asked how much they hope to raise for the charity, the kids all chimed in: "As much as we can."

Raffle tickets are \$5 each, and are available at the Stanley school office until May 21. The night of the open house, May 14, tickets will be sold in the library, the wood shop as well as the

Smart eighth-graders at Stanley Middle School are giving back to the community in a truly constructive way. Students in Michele Murphy's wood technology class built a custom-made Adirondack chair to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The chair will be raffled off at the school open house during the first week in June. The cedar charity chair, personalized with the Make-A-Wish star logo is in addition to students' own handcrafted chairs that will go home when complete. They all pitched in when they had extra classroom time to build the Make-A-Wish chair.

Creating something this intricate takes work, even with the help of computer-aided design, or CAD. "The students have used not only traditional woodworking machines but also modern technology," said Murphy. "They have personalized the chair using a CNC (computer numeric controls) machine, designed it on a computer and then built it in the wood shop."

Her hands-on class is project oriented, with an emphasis on following directions and working in

office.



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[back](#)

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