



BHS

VPA Department

NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 27, 2020: CREATIVITY IN THE TIME OF COVID

Wonderful VPA Families,

Autumn is upon us, and BHS is revisiting time-honored traditions: football games, celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, and preparations for VPA performances. Here's a look at the week that was.

HOUSE CALLS VPA Art teacher Cathie Janssen has shrunk the distance of her “distance” learners by making house calls to their residences. Ordinarily, Ms. Janssen assigns summer projects for her 3-D class that she collects during the first weeks of the school year; with many of her students at home learning remotely, Ms. Janssen has taken it upon herself to visit their homes to photograph the works, provide feedback, and just check in with her students and families. It's been a win-win for students and Ms. Janssen, an opportunity to feel just that much closer in this time of relative isolation. She even visited homes of in-person learners.

As for the works themselves: well, COVID hasn't crushed creativity or craftsmanship, and that shows in the fine works of the Level 2 Art class. One project called for artists to create an environment for real or imagined animals; in the second project, students had to create a structurally sound piece out of more than 300 common household objects. Photos below by Cathie Janssen.



Far left: Mehak Sandhu's spiraled environment creation; left: Alanna Hutton took her inspiration from bold colors on white.

Below: Kaylee Luna's "Multiples" project, which tasked students with finding several household objects to create a piece.



ART AS THERAPY: The stress inflicted by the pandemic has crept into just about every aspect of life, and the district is offering wellness webinars to staff to help school personnel maintain health and balance. In this endeavor, Any Given Child Sarasota program director Brian Hersh has invited Mr. Strenk to lead a painting workshop for district employees in October. Strenk was selected because of the popularity of a webinar he facilitated over the summer through Embracing Our Differences. His method: grab an old credit card to use to squeegee the paint; unwind through creative expression that comes organically out of typical household materials: old wall paint that may be collecting dust in someone's garage can be enlisted as a tool for expression and stress reduction.

Right: King of the Chill—Strenk's art transcends the frame.



IN THE WORKS: The Dance Department is in rehearsal for its fall showcase as well as works to be featured in “Phantasmic!,” the VPA’s first public event since pandemic struck. Teacher and choreographer Jenna Outerbridge has taken inspiration from “Swan Lake” to create a piece that explores the fight between good and evil that exists within us all. We dipped into the rehearsal studios this week to see the dancers at work with the ballet choreography.



Far left: Good and evil as exist within one soul, portrayed by black swan and white swans. L-R Majja Boelkins, Ja’Shaiya Paschal, Lauren Reasoner, Millie Menke, and Alexis Anker as featured dancers.

Left: Senior Lauren Reasoner in attitude derriere.

A BAND IS BORN! The second VPA modern band has been named! The moniker North Wind came about through a collaborative discussion of possibilities for the newest VPA Band. The process of arriving at the name through consensus is a great reminder of arts education in action as a means of reinforcing the value and practice of democracy. Stay tuned for news of their performance debut!

ART FOCUS OF THE WEEK—MUSIC COMPOSITION: Ms. Choe’s Music Technology students are using all that foundation they received in their Music Theory classes to come up with new takes on an old standard—“Happy Birthday to You.” While most don’t hear the tune but once a year, these students are refreshing and rearranging it to suit several criteria, from adding genre characteristics to composing for multiple instruments and embellishments.

Combining imagination with the technical knowhow and the app MuseScore, the students have come up with new takes on a familiar tune. If you’re tired of hearing the conventional way the song is performed, you’d be impressed with this fresh look at an old tradition.



Far left: Juniors Ella Sams and Kori Garza share ideas for their compositions.

Immediate left: Juniors Ben Strom and Cameron Piekarz take in Ms. Choe’s lecture.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS—AND KNOCKS!: The deadline for the Hispanic Heritage Month Essay contest has been extended! It’s a 500-word essay with the theme of “Celebrating Untold Stories and Contributions of Hispanic Americans in Florida” that’s now due on Oct.15. Essay contest winners receive a four-year prepaid scholarship to a Florida college. For details, click here: <http://floridahispanicheritage.com/>

MASK DRIVE: Enormous thanks to those who have committed to helping us provide safe masks for our instrumentalists, and to mask-maker extraordinaire & VPA friend Cathy Kersten, owner of MASK-erade, who is offering woodwind and brass instrument masks for just \$10 apiece (\$5 off the retail value). If you’d like to contribute to this worthy cause, please go to www.bookervpa.com/donate. \$10 can make a huge difference in the health of our bands!