

Students Learn Business Skills, Help School

Class: From page 1

has streamlined the entire process.

The educational goal of the block is to teach students how to draft designs for the projects, how to build them, and how to market them. Students receive orders from customers and then make a scale drawing of the item. When the projects are completed, students evaluate each other on the job.

Originally, Mr. Wellnitz would present the drafts and prices to potential customers. Now, the students are starting to develop the presentations as well as calculate the prices.

"The whole idea is to get them to feel how an entrepreneur would," Mr. Wellnitz said.

Many of the students are long-time participants in the school's wood shop class. Brittany Lee, a senior, has taken the class for all of her high school career and is learning construction skills she can use later in life, plus raising money for a good cause.

"I think it's a very good idea for us to volunteer our time to help out the community and school," she said.

Justin Pollard, a junior, has taken wood shop since he was in eighth grade and enjoys the challenge wood shop offers. He once built a miniature log cabin.

"I like to try new things," he said.

Senior Rebecca Dowdell took wood shop in ninth and 10th grade and originally wanted to pursue a



Justin Pollard, a junior at Les Cheneaux Community Schools, applies finish to a part of a bed during woodworking class. Mr. Pollard has taken wood shop classes since he was in eighth grade.

career in construction. Although she has changed her career path, she joined the woodworking block because she enjoys the projects.

While the students change each semester, the quality generates critical praise from customers from across Michigan.

Ken Williamson of Elk Rapids purchased a gun cabinet from the class and said he was thrilled by the

quality.

"It was just outstanding," he said. "You can't buy this quality from the store."

Cristi Smith of Sault Ste. Marie purchased several pieces, including an eight-foot bookcase. The dimen-



Seniors Trent Pitko (left) and Cody Grove construct a gun case in class Friday, December 4. Many of the projects completed are sold to drum up funding for Les Cheneaux Community Schools.

sions were exactly what she wanted, and she is pleased with the comments people make about it.

"Nobody walks into our house without commenting on it," Mrs. Smith said. "Nobody ever believes that kids made it."

Dave Proctor, a resident of Clare County and a friend of Mr. Williamson, has ordered four pieces of furniture from the class, including a gun cabinet, coffee

table, and end table. Mr. Proctor believes the students create excellent pieces and said many people comment on the quality.

"Everybody is just amazed," he said. "They really like the stuff."

The class is involved in community projects, as well. Four students are replacing trim in the Clark Township Community Center in Cedarville, which presents its own challenges and lessons. While strip-

ping the original trim, the students found some of the cement on the floor is uneven and are now working on a solution to that. Mr. Wellnitz said he explains to students that, as contractors, they would have to take such challenges into account when placing bids for work.

"I want to take them from being a worker bee to running the show," Mr. Wellnitz said.

Local Help Is Available for Paying Winter Heating Bills

Heating: From page 1

The largest part of a customer's bill is the "gas cost recovery" (GCR) portion, the price of the gas itself. In December 2008, the GCR was 97.5¢ per hundred cubic feet. For December 2009, the GCR is 57.5¢ per hundred cubic feet, Mr. Lubbers said.

For customers of Edison Sault Electric, Mr. Sawruk said, prices will be slightly higher because its parent company, Wisconsin Electric, is bringing a new plant online and the costs of purchasing power will increase as the power company recovers its costs. About 35% to 40% of electricity the company provides is hydroelectric, while the remainder is purchased from Wisconsin Electric Power Com-

pany.

Customers of the Cloverland Electric Cooperative can expect to see an increase in their electric bill compared to last year, as well. The cooperative also purchases power from the Wisconsin Electric Power Company, leading to the increase. General Manager Dan Dasho explained if a customer used a typical 1,000 kilowatts a month last year, and uses the same amount this year, the customer will see about a \$3 increase in the monthly bill.

Propane costs from Autore Oil of Cedarville will likely decrease this winter, said the company's president, Steve Autore. Prices per gallon for propane will decrease from \$2.29 to \$1.79 this year. Those prices assume customers pay

their bills within five days for a 10¢ discount, he added.

Fuel oil from Autore will increase in cost this year compared to last, however. In 2008, oil cost \$2.32 per gallon but increased this year by 17¢ to \$2.49. Prices assume customers receive the 10¢ discount.

Assistance With Paying Heating Bills

Energy providers offer budget plans and community groups can provide assistance.

Semco may be able to develop a payment plan for customers or direct customers to assistance programs, Mr. Lubbers said. It is best to call Semco as quickly as possible if customers believe they have difficulties. Customers can reach customer service at (800) 624-2019.

"Call us sooner [rather] than later," Mr. Lubbers advises.

Edison Sault offers similar help. Customers can call the main number at 632-2221 and work out a payment plan if they believe they will have trouble paying. Representatives can also connect customers with local, state, or federal programs that provide heating assistance.

Cloverland Electric can enroll customers in a payment plan if they expect payment difficulties.

"The key is, call us. Don't wait until the bill is overdue," Mr. Dasho said.

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) offers a state emergency relief program. To be eligible, residents must complete an application and must have an overdue bill or shutoff notice. Other information, such as income, number of members in the individual's

family, and expenses, will also be requested. If approved, DHS can provide assistance for heating bills up to a capped amount, said Terry Bush, the program supervisor.

Natural gas, wood, and electricity users can receive aid up to \$550. Oil or propane users can receive aid up to \$850. Users with an all-electric home can be aided up to \$1,100. The department can be contacted at 643-9550 and is at 199 Ferry Lane in St. Ignace.

Community Action Agency provides heating assistance for residents using oil or propane fuel. To be eligible, residents must first be turned away from DHS and must provide proof of income. If the assistance is approved, the agency grants a lump sum \$550 once a year. The agency may also provide gas and electric assistance next year beginning January 1, depending on funding received, coordinator Sheri Gould said.

St. Ignace Area Hope can connect residents to heating assistance resources through the hope hotline, or can aid them if they are in a hardship situation. The hotline can be reached at 643-6780.

Residents can also receive help from the Sault Ste. Marie Salvation Army. The Salvation Army helps with all forms of heating in Luce, Mackinac, and Chippewa counties, said Stephanie Doran, the director of social services. Those in need can receive aid for the heating season, which continues until the end of April, or until funding for assistance runs out, she said. Residents must provide photo identification, Social Security numbers for everyone who lives in the household, and have an overdue bill that reflects the client's name and current address. Eligibility is determined by several factors, including income. Anyone interested in receiving aid from the Salvation Army must make an appointment with Mrs. Doran at (906) 632-6521. The Salvation Army expects to receive funding for the program in the next few weeks.

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Freeze Alert

TIPS FROM THE PROS

To Prevent Frozen Pipes

- ⇒ Be Sure All Foundation Vents are Closed and Air Tight
- ⇒ Remove Garden Hose from Outside Faucets
- ⇒ Plug Any Cracks in Foundation
- ⇒ Check for water lines that are run close to the foundation vent and insulate them.

To Prevent Heating Failures If You Have a LP Gas Furnace...

- ⇒ Keep the Snow Shoveled Off the Tank and All Around the Tank
- ⇒ Make Sure Your LP Regulator is Not Under an Eve so as to Prevent Water from Dripping on it—Protect it with a Cover
- ⇒ If you have a high efficiency furnace that vents with plastic through the side of the house, keep snow cleaned away from vent

If You Have a Fuel Oil Furnace...

- ⇒ Make Sure Your Oil Filter is in a Warm Environment
- ⇒ Don't Forget to Change Air Filters and Oil Motors
- ⇒ If you leave your house unattended for more than 24 hours please have someone monitor your inside temperature.

Make sure your contractor or installer is licensed and is available for 24 hour service, is listed in the phone book as such, or leaves emergency number with the owner.

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