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Journalism 1

Professor Tropin

St. Mary's Art Club

The bell goes off and, after the end-of-the-day prayer, the kids rush to the entrance to wait for their parents. But for some of the students from St. Mary of Assumption Elementary School the day does not end at 3pm. On Tuesdays around twenty four kids go up the third floor of the school and head to the Art classroom for their weekly explosion of creativity.

Before the children enter the room escorted by their Art teacher, Kristina Steg, a group of Loyola volunteers set up everything for the daily lesson. They organize the material and place napkins with a daily treat they give to the kids before starting the projects. So by the time the St. Mary artists get into the classroom chatting, dancing and hugging each other; everything is laid out, and a delicious snack is waiting for them.

Snack time seems to be a good transition for the kids to get into art-mode and get ready to have fun. The classroom is filled with the laughter of students from 1st to 3rd grade and they listen politely after the volunteers asked them to quiet down and start explaining the activity for the day.

The activity of the day is cave drawings or cave painting. Some kids eyes double in size when Zach Oster, the head of the student volunteers for the day, explained how they would practice their favorite animal and then draw it on the big sheet of paper that covers the board.

Once the kids get their materials and start drawing their animal, they loosen up and have a really great time. The kids were full of energy and the lively environment encased a delightful chaos. There were smiles everywhere. The faces radiated pride once they finished their draft and showed their animal to their classmates. And the same reaction came from the students being helped by Loyola volunteers. For a second the class got transported to ancient cave with jaguar, multicolor snakes, monkeys and a doggy! They also shared a lot, especially the materials. Art time is fun time!

“Creativity is allowing you to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep,” reads one of the walls, and these kids have a way to prove this. It was amazing to experience this. And the group of volunteers will come to help with ideas for projects, the snacks, and just structure this playful yet meaningful extracurricular at St. Mary’s school.

Just as Ms. Steg said, Loyola volunteers keep the interaction with the students and provide artistic support. The structure of the art club is more relaxed and ergo didactic than a mere class. They divided responsibilities almost weekly in order to come up with fresh ideas. According to Steg, the volunteers are the ones who organize the club and engage the students and her role is to discipline and help when necessary. “There is usually one main volunteer and the others are in charge of the food and to go from table to table and help the students,” Steg says.

The children love the club. It is an environment for them to feel welcome and to use their imagination. They can also run around and just be kids. In the middle of the smiles and playful eyes, the art club also allows the students to connect with each other in a differently level. It gives them an opportunity to share not just utensils but also

opinions. St. Mary's students learn to admire each others creations and to build a different kind off community while forming a taste for art and culture.

According to Oster, the most important thing is that the children are having fun. That is why they are looking for new ideas to give the children a more hands-on experience. During the first meeting the kids' project included drawing and to getting them comfortable with expressing themselves through art. "The idea is to get the kids interested in art. And to get involved in cultural activities as much as they can," he says.