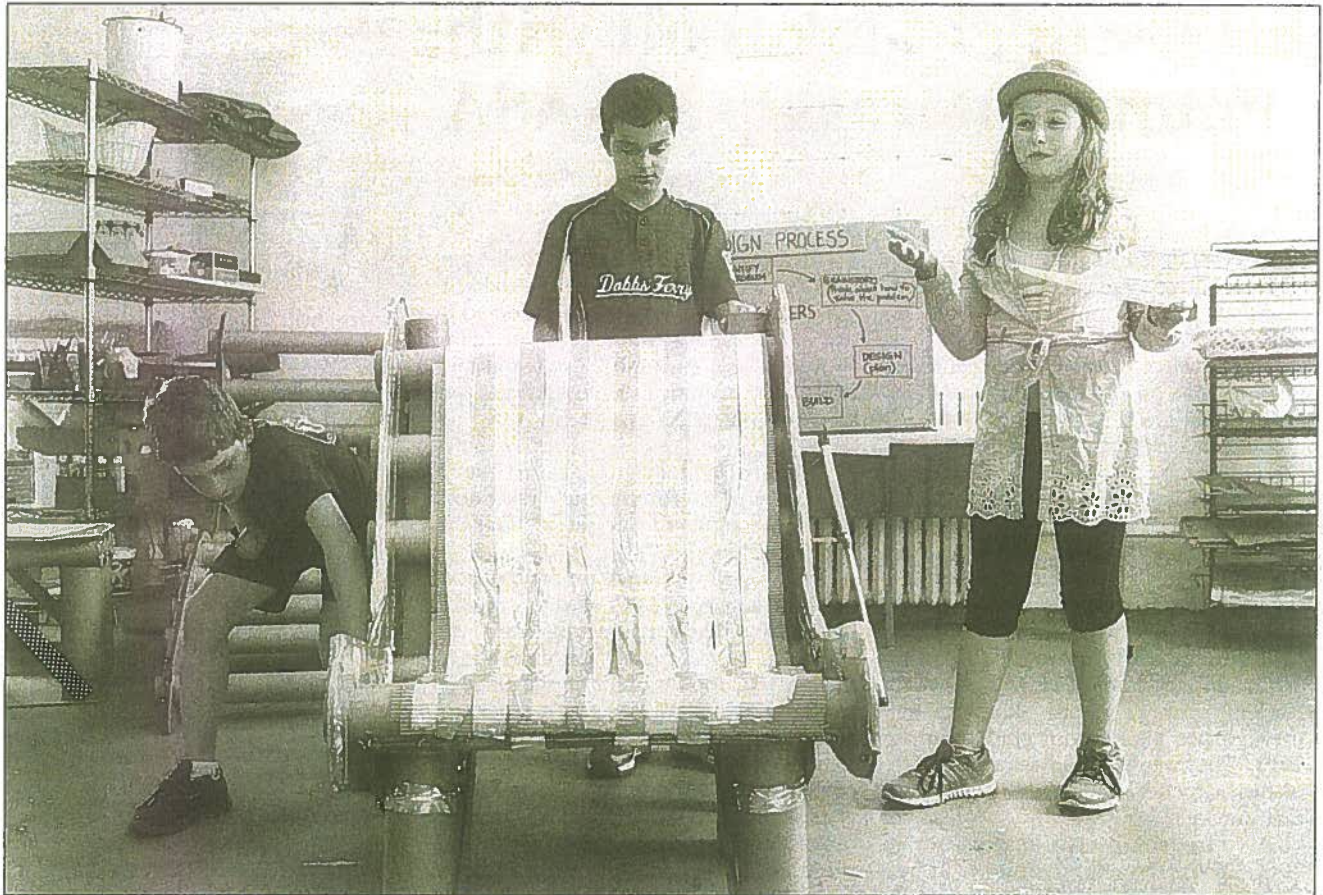


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TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

Max Solomon, Matthew Greco and Ava Nemeč show off their chair, named the "King's Throne."

Kids sit for crash course in form, function

By Colleen Michele Jones

Using no more than sheets of corrugated cardboard, cylindrical mailing tubes, and duct tape, a dozen local kids had the chance last week to explore the basic concepts of architecture by constructing chairs from that short list of materials.

Dobbs Ferry moms Karen Orloff and Kathryn Slocum and Queens resident Janny Gedeon — was held Aug. 26-29 at Curious-on-Hudson, a venue within the 145 Palisade Street building in Dobbs Ferry offering classes, lectures, and workshops for both adults and children.

It was the first time ArchForKids, which was launched this spring by the three women, was offered at Curious-on-Hudson. At a cost of \$325 per child, including materials, the 12 participants,

aged 8 to 14, worked in teams of three or four each over the four weekdays of the camp. Each team completed a number of building challenges that culminated in the presentation last Thursday of four cardboard-assembled chairs of their own design.

The results, unveiled before an audience of parents, were pretty impressive. There was a double-seater chair, a regal "King's Throne," a chaise longue with built-in cup holder, and the "Monster Mama," as functional as it was decorative, the chair decked out in every color of the rainbow.

Genevieve Greco, a fourth-grader at Springhurst Elementary School in Dobbs Ferry who attended the camp with her brother Matt, a sixth-grader, said her team had chosen their particular motif in order to "stand out, like, 'Boom!'"

Genevieve added, "I really enjoyed

watching our chair progress."

The young architects approached the undertaking quite scientifically, beginning their design process by identifying a problem (in this case, how to design a functional chair); brainstorming; designing; building; testing and evaluating effectiveness; redesigning if necessary; and then presenting and sharing final results.

Adjusting and readjusting legs, supports, and beams were par for the course.

Discussing some of the issues her group encountered in the construction of the throne, which at 36 inches high and 32 inches wide ended up being the largest chair of the bunch, Dobbs Ferry fifth-grader Ava Nemeč said, "Whenever we tried to stand it up it fell backwards, like a rocking chair. We definitely had to fix that because it's not very comfortable to keep falling back."

Megan McDade, a DFMS eighth-grader, said she was surprised to learn that pieces of cardboard, if properly assembled, actually had weight-bearing capabilities.

"I didn't think it [the material] would be able to support us," she said.

In the process, the students learned the meaning of terms such as torsion, symmetry, bracing, gravity, and equilibrium. And it is exactly this kind of hands-on approach to learning that Orloff, Gedeon, and Slocum are hoping will connect with kids. They also touch on concepts of math, science, art, and even social studies, Orloff said.

"Kids are naturally inquisitive; they want to touch things and see how they're put together, so it's a good introduction to the concepts behind structures," said Orloff, a professional architect with a teaching background.

"But there's also a lot of creative flexibility," added Slocum, a former business development director who met Orloff and Gedeon, another architect, through the three women's membership in a professional association before creating ArchForKids together.

Curious-on-Hudson founder Adele Falco said ArchForKids was a good fit with the types of exploratory classes she offers at her multi-use space within the former warehouse at 145 Palisade, which is currently home to an assortment of artists as well as entrepreneurs.

"We love this kind of creative learning," said Falco.

The three women will bring ArchForKids to Yonkers this fall as artists-in-residence at the Hudson River Museum. They're also hoping to expand the program to schools and to offer an after-school architecture club for kids, building parties, and even a "Mommy and Me"-type class for kids age 6 and under.

For more information on ArchForKids, visit the website www.archforkids.com, or e-mail the organizers at info.archforkids@gmail.com.