

See Penguins on Parade in Rocky Hill

Submitted by Marguerite Alpert, Enrichment Coordinator, K-12

The morning I walked into Jilani Scherer's art classroom, I knew I was in a special and exciting place. As I was taking off my coat, four children stopped by to ask if they were too late to get in on the after school Art Club. Regretfully, Mrs. Scherer had to share the news that she was already full, but encouraged each child to be hopeful because she had a waiting list started. She later told me that she had envisioned the 12 week club to have 15 students, but in a short time she had permission slips swelling to 45! It didn't take me long to see why so many children flocked to her basement art room in Stevens School...

It was a quiet and cold morning: perfect for penguins. But in this classroom, these penguins were anything but cold. There was a surfer dude penguin, a football penguin, a "Medusa" penguin, a "Phantom of the Opera" penguin, a Rocky Hill High School cheerleader penguin, and many, many more with bright and fantastic themes. They were all placed on the art tables, quietly waiting for the fifth grade class to come in and work on the finishing touches.

Mrs. Scherer named the project "Penguins on Parade", which was inspired by the "Cows on Parade" that you may have seen in West Hartford. The "Cows on Parade" have been in many cities in the United States including New York City, Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Denver, Houston, Las Vegas and many more. The Cows have also been on parade in many cities around the world including Warsaw in Poland, Manchester in England, Florence in Italy, Barcelona in Spain just to name a few! In this endeavor, local artists have the opportunity to propose a plan and paint a life-size fiberglass cow in any way they can imagine. Then the cows are displayed as public art so people can walk around them and see them.

All of Mrs. Scherer's 5th grade students (120 of them!) had to sketch a proposal for a penguin plan and then build the penguins completely out of recyclables. This fantastic art project fits perfectly with the district theme of environment: The body is made from a Coffee Mate container which the 5th graders had to save and bring in, the beaks are egg cartons, and the wings and feet are made of cardboard box pieces. Once the forms are together, the students then paper mache them with old newspaper, then paint and design!

The librarians at the Cora J. Belden Public Library were thrilled to hear about the penguins. They agreed to exhibit the Stevens School "Penguins on Parade". Our librarians liked the idea so much that they decided to use the penguin theme for all their activities for the month of January in honor of this exhibit. What a wonderful collaboration between our schools and our public library!

The official Opening Night was on January 21, 2009 6:30-8:00pm. It was a magical evening and the children's section was filled with family, friends, teachers and administrators all smiling and exclaiming at each unique penguin. If you missed opening night, take heart. The penguins will stay in the children's section for two weeks.

Come and see these colorful and creative penguins inspired by some of Rocky Hill's best artists – our children!

Jilani Scherer contributed to this article.

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