

New Arts program helps students interact

A new way to think outside the box

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COVENTRY — Students in Kathy Hudson's family consumer science survey course got to take a break from their normal routine last week on Friday.

The Coventry High School teacher had coordinated with a representative from Trinity Repertory Company to coordinate the kick off of a project for her students and invited a special guest to come to her classroom.

So last week, Carrie Azano, the education director from Trinity Repertory Company, visited Coventry High School to work with Hudson's students.

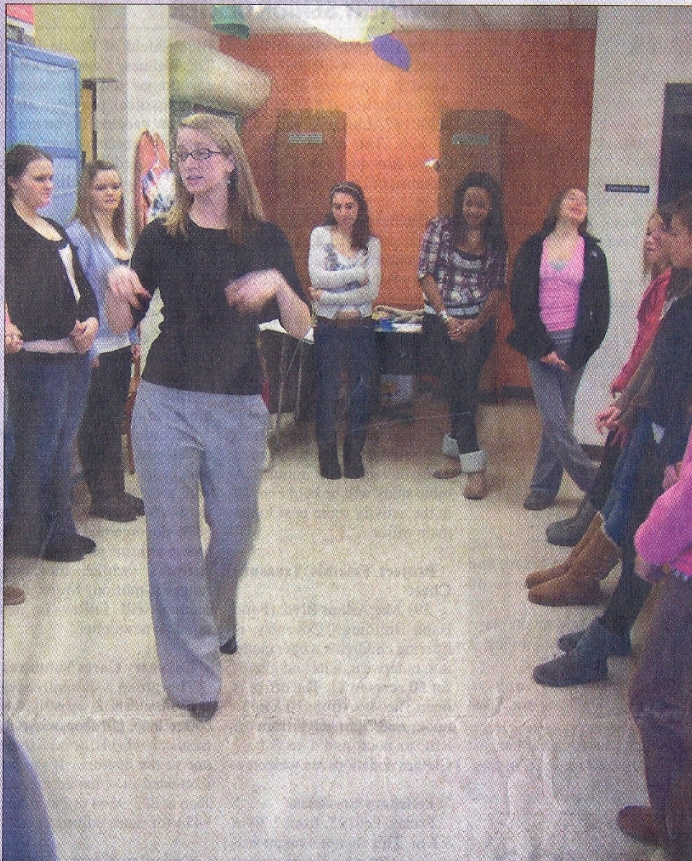
A mixture of female students from ninth to twelfth grade worked with Azano on the development of a project for Hudson's course. The project, based on different communities, required the students to develop ideas and concepts to make their community flourish. The plan was for them to create clothing, jobs, societal roles, customs, traditions, foods, housing styles and more that would be ideal for their climate and community conditions.

How Azano came into play, Hudson explained, was an attempt to get the students excited about the project using theatre based training strategies and tips that actors use prior to a show. Azano said that in her experience working with various school aged students, often times youngsters more easily take hold of an idea and get motivated by an idea when it is presented to them by an outsider, someone from that particular professional field.

In theory, it appeared to work. Last Friday, at 7:30 in the morning, when the students in Hudson's class would typically just have been sitting in their chairs researching on their own for the project, Azano had them up, moving around and participating in various activities. Activities that got them moving about, talking and communicating with others in the class, many, which despite the fact that they were in the same class, didn't even know one another by name, and most importantly, excited about the upcoming project.

Hudson's students weren't actually the only students at Coventry High School that will be benefiting from such surprise visits. Apparently, a select group of teachers signed on with Hudson to participate in the annual Arts Talks program, a program that was developed 20 years ago to help high school educators in "all" subject areas implement arts-integrated curriculum.

How the program works is that participating teachers from each community sign on to attend various workshops sponsored by the Arts Talks program. Various Rhode Island artists perform at these different workshops to give educators a flavor for the type of mediums that they could bring into their classrooms and then the



Submitted Photo

Carrie Azano, the education director from Trinity Repertory Company, paid a visit to the students in Kathy Hudson's consumer science survey course at Coventry High School last week.

educators can invite them through the Arts Talks program, to come to their school to work with their students.

Hudson did it; Gene Dufault, the woodwork/carpentry instructor, and Bill Smith, one of the music instructors, both from Coventry High School also signed on.

Those teachers in addition to a number of others from around the state come together at these various workshops on prescheduled Saturdays throughout the year and watch various artists perform or display work.

Recently, the three educators from Coventry High School attend a workshop that sparked an interest for DuFault. He said that from that workshop he decided that he would bring the practice of barrel making to his classroom. He said that he was referred to a professional cooper and hooper, the original makers of wooden barrels, which now work out of Sturbridge Village, and arranged for them to come and work with his students.

He said that his students will be using the knowledge that they gain from this experience to make a bucket to go along with the well house cover that they are making for installation at the well known historic Paine House Museum in Coventry.

He said that he also will be instructing his students in the making of miniature drums based on the skills that they learn.

"At first I wondered how I would fit music education into my wood working curriculum,

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but this is a perfect fit," Du-Fault said. "The drums that these musicians used were made out of wood, and on top of that, they were basically the same wooden barrel design concept that the coopers were going to be teaching us. "It all worked out perfectly."

That lesson, he said, will tie into a lesson that Smith is coordinating for his students through the Rhode Island Philharmonic

program, Hudson said.

According to Hudson, the three educators from CHS had also attended an Arts Talks workshop where a musical group performed that all three of them found particularly interesting and thought that their students would love. So they decided that they would introduce that group to their students.

The entire concept, Hudson said, is a great opportunity for the students.

"Everyone asks why I would

have a theater person working with my consumer science students, but what they don't realize is that the curriculum crosses over into all different educational areas," she said. "English isn't just English anymore, I have to teach English in my class as well and visa versa, and it makes for a much more well rounded course; I think anyway. And the opportunities provided through this program make it that much more interesting for us and for the students to be able to do that."