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SPORTS

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Young Rembrandts keep it simple with shapes

Program breaks drawing down for St. John's students

By **LINDA MCALPINE**
Daily News

The discussion in Ronny Polinski's class Tuesday afternoon centered around circles, triangles, rectangles and curves.

A math class? No, it was in an after-school art class called Young Rembrandts at St. John's Lutheran School.

Who knew that a classic painting like "American Gothic" by Grant Wood could be broken down into simple shapes — simple enough that second- and third-graders can draw it?

That's the premise of Young Rembrandts, Polinski said as she prepared for Tuesday afternoon's class for her five young Rembrandt-wannabes.

"The kids pick out the shapes



John Ehlike/Daily News

Makiah Mueller, 7, sticks her tongue out as she works on the pencil sketch of her "school of fish" cartoon exercise as part of the Young Rembrandts class after school on Tuesday afternoon at St. John's Lutheran School in West Bend.

they see in a painting or drawing and they re-create them," she said. Last week, the class tackled

American Gothic with good results — their drawings bore more than a passing resemblance

to the original.

The students start their art with a blank paper and use a pencil to draw lines, dividing it into four sections, which will serve as guidelines for the placement of the drawing, Polinski said.

As Tuesday was the last in the one-day-a-week, six-week course, her students chose to draw a cartoon.

"This is a cartoon of a school of fish," Polinski said as her class giggled at the cartoon they were about to draw, which was of a fish standing in front of a chalkboard teaching a math problem to four finny students.

Step by step, Polinski broke the cartoon drawing down into its simplest elements.

The fish bodies were nothing more than circular shapes with a few triangles attached for fins. Toss in a few smaller circles and put a tiny dot in the center of each and voila, you've got eyeballs.

Please see **SHAPES/A8**

Shapes: Teaches students vital skills

The class helps students develop spatial reasoning, visualization and fine motor skills in addition to the fundamentals of art, Polinski said.

"The students also learn about the art they are drawing," she said. "They learned the background about the painting 'American Gothic' and about the artist."

"I think it was the drawing of the cars that we did because the cars were stacked one on top of another like a tower," said Braeden Christianson, a St. John's second-grader, when asked if he had a favorite drawing.

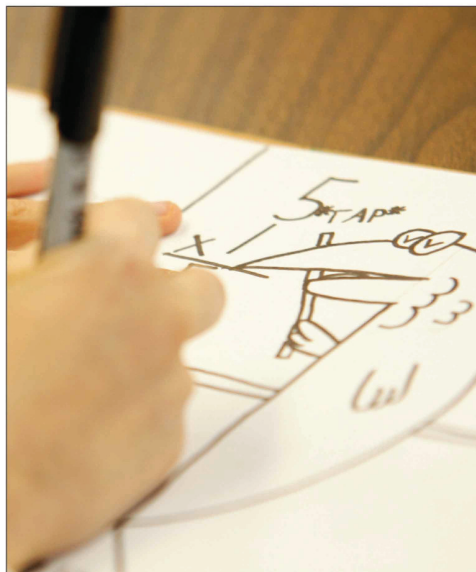
Seven-year-old Otto Bryan said his favorite drawing was a nutcracker.

Owen Carlson, 8, said re-creating a drawing of a dog curled up asleep in its bed was his favorite, and horse lover Heleyna Weiss, 9, enjoyed drawing a blue horse. The blue horse was also the favorite of art classmate Makiah Mueller, 7.

St. John's Lutheran School Administrator Dawn Oldenettel said she's pleased the school has been able to offer the Young Rembrandts program.

"We have a lot of other things for students, such as sports, but it's nice to be able to have something for the arts," Oldenettel said. "It's been a blessing to see the students artwork develop as they also gain self-confidence in their drawing. The teacher is wonderful with the students and they are proud of their work and each other."

Young Rembrandts was founded in 1988 by Bette Fetter, who worked with kids in her



John Ehlike/Daily News

Heleyna Weiss, 9, outlines her pencil sketch with a Sharpie on Tuesday during the Young Rembrandts art class at St. John's Lutheran School in West Bend.

home, teaching them a step-by-step method of drawing. The program is a franchise and the classes in Menomonee Falls and West Bend are part of a franchise owned by Don Eisenhauer. For more information, visit www.youngrembrandts.com.