

The next Rembrandt?

Posted: Sunday, October 20, 2013 2:45 pm

Have you ever wondered if your young boy or girl at home may be the next da Vinci or the next Rembrandt? Whether they may become that or not, there is an option in the village that could potentially help push your child in that direction.

Right here in McFarland is a chapter of Young Rembrandts, a organization that offers classes geared toward teaching kids drawing techniques. Lessons often play off a history lesson or just an overall life lesson.

James Cayo, a 1996 graduate of McFarland High, is now the executive director of Young Rembrandts' south-central Wisconsin region.

He also said that a program like this is important for kids because it can be a helpful learning supplement for kids going through school.

"We're so straight forward in classes with testing, but we forget kids have to learn how to make it through and have the patience," Cayo said. "Kids need to develop the patience by sitting through things with crayons, markers and other things."

Cayo also said something like this can help boost confidence.

"Say in soccer, if a kid plays on defense and their team wins every game, but since they are on defense they don't score a goal. They (may) feel like they failed because they didn't score a goal," Cayo said. "In Young Rembrandts, we teach kids how to draw. At the end of the first class, they walk away with a drawing. Then the next week we show them how to do something a little more challenging and they still walk away with something."

Young Rembrandts was founded by Bette Fetter in 1988. Fetter began the program in her home and now Young Rembrandts spans -- states and has chapters in Canada, Germany, South Korea, Jordan and others.

Young Rembrandts is set up into two groups. First, there are preschool groups for kids 3 1/2-5 year olds. Also, there are elementary programs for students 6-12. Students can be signed up for cartooning which has a section starts on Oct. 31 and runs through Dec. 4. That class runs from 3-4:15 p.m. on Wednesdays. Students can create silly characters, make funny sequences and draw sequences with jokes. Materials are supplied. Experienced child artists or beginners can join the class. The cost is is \$63.

"One of the good things is (the price listed) is what it's going to cost for the class," Cayo said. "So you

just have to show up."

With classes, curriculums are given to instructors from the Young Rembrandts headquarters in Elgin, Ill. They are always varied, so students will never have the same lesson. Students can also take classes multiple times because they will not see the same exact lesson twice, franchise officials say.

Also parents can sign kids up for the Castle Workshop that will run from 3-4:30 p.m. every Tuesday in November. The workshop entails drawing characters and objects that would appear in and around castles such as jousters, knights, catapults and more. The cost is \$56. Materials are supplied for the workshop as well. There have been workshops in communities in the area such as Cambridge, Lake Mills and Sun Prairie.

Although it is technically not a activity by the school, Young Rembrandts in McFarland operates in Waubesa Intermediate School and pay rent to be in the classroom. Teachers are all volunteers.

Cayo said he is willing to help families with enrolling a student into a class. He said, depending on the circumstances, he may be willing to help them out as far as the cost. Also, if parents contact Cayo prior to the start of class, he will allow students to try the class to see if it is something they would like to continue.

Along with art, the program is focused on fun. Cayo has even become known as "Mr. Jellybean" to his students.

"In my McFarland class around three years ago, the kids nicknamed me 'Mr. Jellybean.' So all of my classes from Janesville up to DeForest and from Lake Mills over to Sun Prairie know me by that," Cayo said. "Right around Halloween, a parent or someone, brought in jellybeans. A girl was trading jellybeans because she loved purple jellybeans. I walked in and I was wearing a bright purple shirt. She then said, 'Look, it's a giant jellybean.' So the name kind of stuck."

Odd, off-the-wall sounding nicknames are not a foreign idea at Young Rembrandts. Look no further than Margie Braskamp, a retired administrative assistant who also teaches at Young Rembrandts.

"They call me 'Ms. Snickerdoodle' because I snicker and I love to doodle," Braskamp said.

The nicknames are meant to be fun and that is what the program is meant to be -- fun, Cayo said. He also said there may be silly or goofy jokes to make it that fun atmosphere.

Deadlines to sign up for classes are two days prior to the start date. Sections need a minimum of four students for the class to be held. Cayo said he is willing to let students in up to the start date, but that would depend on if he has confirmation on if he has four students at the deadline. For that to be a possibility, Cayo said he needs to have some sort of communication with the parent or guardian whether it is by email or phone.

To sign a child up for a class, go to Youngrembrandts.com. There a link in a yellow box on the main

page with a magnifying glass that says, "Click to Find a Class in your Area." Follow the link and follow the prompts. Then, a page will come up with available classes, each with a yellow "Enroll" tab.

Cayo can also be contacted at either (608) 444-3213 or jcayo@youngrembrandts.com. Questions can also be asked via the Young Rembrandts' general email at info@youngrembrandts.com or by phone at 847-742-6966.