



## Charleroi program promotes creativity

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Charleroi Area School District students were thrilled to be told to “Go fly a kite” as part of the Art Expression Inc. after-school art program this past school year.

A group of students at Charleroi Elementary Center participated in the “ARTmosphere: Weather” module during the spring semester.

Students designed, constructed and decorated kites using recycled and repurposed materials.

“The kids got to experiment. We didn’t just give them a store-bought kite, say ‘Make it,’ and then watch it fly,” high-school art teacher Patrick Camut said. “We made kites, experimented with them, saw that they didn’t fly and then let the kids use their creativity to reinvent the kites to get a kite that eventually flew.”

During the fall semester, middle-school students took part in the “Creative pARTners” program.

Camut and middle-school art teacher Michael Flaherty worked alongside an Art Expression art facilitator for the programs,

which met once a week for six to eight weeks after school.

“We send our art facilitator from Art Expression and we have their staff co-facilitate with us because they know the children and they learn so much from each other,” Art Expression founder and president Angela Lowden said. “Our art facilitators are master’s-degreed art therapists, and they work really well.

“We use art therapists because they’re sensitive to the children’s needs, and they work so well with the art teachers and the other faculty from the district. It’s a great collaboration among them.”

Charleroi Area’s Art Expression programming was made possible through a grant from the Myrtle Forsha Memorial Trust through the PNC Charitable Trusts.

Lowden said Art Expression pursues grants to bring the programs to school districts.

“We’ve been partnering with them for a couple years now,” Charleroi Area Superintendent Ed Zelich said of the organization. “The sad part is, I’m not sure the grant’s going to be awarded to us for next year.”

“The students love the program,” Lowden said. “The school district needs support. These are tough economic times, especially for certain school districts.”

Camut said the program is a great way for children to pursue their interests in art outside of school hours.

The Art Expression projects aren’t graded or critiqued, so students can let their creativity flow.

“The program’s nice because there aren’t a lot of extracurricular activities for kids who are involved in the arts,” he said. “There’s a lot for sports, and there’s nothing wrong with that. Kids need to get out, they need to play sports if they’re interested in sports.

“But you have that group of kids that want to take art classes, that want to do art outside of school. If they don’t have parents who are involved in the arts or know where to find classes, it can be difficult for those kids to explore that.”

He called Art Expression a good thing for the area.

“It gives that group of kids that opportunity to express themselves after school, to get extra class and to do something. If they love art and that’s what they love, they can go and do it,” he said.



Students from Charleroi Area Elementary Center watch as art teacher Patrick Camut tests a kite during a session of ARTmosphere: Weather.