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Cultural opportunities connect families in Cornelius

Carrie C. Causey Jan 30, 2019

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Charlotte Ballet members held story times throughout the region, including a reading of “Peter Pan” at Cornelius Town Hall. Carrie C. Causey

CORNELIUS – On one side of the Cornelius Town Hall community room a Lego car raced across the floor. On the other end, youth made colorful creations using ink and coffee filters.

The Cain Center for the Arts, Digi-Bridge and the Arts and Science Council partnered Jan. 26 for a day of creating during ASC's annual Connect with Culture days.

Digi-Bridge Operations Manager Caitlin Smith said she was excited the organization was included to offer people the chance to try Lego Education WeDo 2.0, a robotics program.

"A lot of people don't have access to technology or technology isn't offered in schools," Smith said.

The Charlotte nonprofit volunteers predominantly work with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, but she was glad to bridge the technology divide through an arts and sciences collaboration.

Cooper Broach, a 6-year-old from Denver, said he followed the instructions to build a Lego race car, and his mom used a laptop computer to guide it. Broach was one of the many attendees who teamed with his parents and guardians at the event.

Samantha Schwab had both her grandfather and father helping her out, and that's what Barbara Ann Temple, the ASC vice president of education, loved to see during the event.

"Our role is to be a cultural resource and a hub to bring people together and connect families," Temple said, adding it was neat to see the multi-generational aspect.

"Family engagement gets me geeked. It's all about accessibility and making them feel welcome when they come in."

Cain Center for the Arts, the future arts center in downtown Cornelius, was also represented through youth activities. At town hall, Melissa Ohlman-Roberge designed centers where young artists could be inspired by some of the greats, including Georgia O'Keeffe, Sonia Dawn Boyce and Henri Matisse. Each offered information about the artists, examples of their work and a hands-on activity. At the Matisse table, people made abstract art using scissors to make shapes; while at the Alexander Calder table, they made moving sculptures.

“It allows them to interpret the art of the masters into their own childlike vision,” volunteer Cathy Templeton said. “It’s process-based and shows creating is just as important as the finished product.”

Throughout the region, representatives from dozens of organizations volunteered to offer a variety of free art experiences, Temple said.

In addition to those at Cornelius Town Hall, other local Connect with Culture events were held at the Carolina Raptor Center and Historic Latta Plantation, plus Davidson Community Players offered a free performance of “The Jungle Book.”