

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Jason Gordon
830-885-1081

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MVMS students make priceless presents

When Mountain Valley Middle seventh grader Robert Blackburn shot an eight-point buck last winter, he didn't realize the deer would still be providing Christmas presents more than a year later.

No, Blackburn didn't save deer venison or sausage in his family's freezer. Instead, he's using the antlers to make a ballpoint pen in teacher Randy Simpson's Technology Education class.

It's just one of several innovative holiday gifts, including toolboxes, tic-tac-toe and basketball-hoop games, students have produced. One student even made a gumball machine.

"This is something the student sees from the very beginning of the project to the very end," Simpson said. "They take a lot of pride in it because it's something they did. They get a great sense of self worth when they give a gift like that to their mom, dad or grandparents."

Blackburn will give his pen to his older brother Jason for Christmas.

"It's great, because I knew exactly what I wanted when I picked out the design for the pen," Blackburn said. "I also know how well it's made. You never quite know what you're going to get when you go buy one somewhere else."

Simpson said another advantage of a project like this one is students are provided all the resources they need for building their gifts in class.

His multi-use classroom lab is equipped with computers that contain AutoCAD software, an application for 2D and 3D design and drafting, as well as production machines like drill presses, sanders and wood lathes.

"With the economy like it is, a lot of these kids don't have the money to go out and buy everyone a nice present," Simpson said. "Also, in a smaller community, we're not close to any big stores or shopping malls. I think what

we're able to accomplish right here in class around the holidays is great and it gives our kids a big boost of confidence."

Mountain Valley Middle principal Scott Hammond received a pen as a gift from a student in Simpson's class earlier in the school year.

"This is such an important project because when I come in here to observe I see these kids doing every bit of the work on their own," Hammond said. "You can see it in their eyes just how good it makes them feel to be able to make these things by themselves. They're also learning valuable skills that they will be able to use in the future."

Seventh grader Skyler Tschoepe designed a basketball goal game for his sister Chelsea, a second grader at Rebecca Creek Elementary.

"It's pretty cool just making stuff, but it's great when I set out to make something for my little sister and then complete the project," Tschoepe said. "I think no matter if you're in a class like this or not, it's a great idea to make gifts for your family members, friends or neighbors. It means so much more when you put your time, hard work and effort into it."

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IN PHOTOS:

Mountain Valley Middle seventh grader Robert Blackburn uses a wood lathe to work meticulously on a pen created from deer antlers he will give as a gift this Christmas. It's part of a project in teacher Randy Simpson's Technology Education class where students are designing and making items like toolboxes and even gumball machines.

MVMS seventh grader Wynne Clark uses a drill press to work on a tic-tac-toe game in teacher Randy Simpson's Tech Ed class. Clark said she plans on giving the game to her younger brother for Christmas.