

Gail Geer teaches CSHS students the art of stone sculpting



Allison Blakenship, a 12th-grader at CSHS, receives assistance from Gail Geer with her stone sculpture during Pat Carr's 3D art class.

Gail Geer, a Southwest Roanoke County resident and nationally renowned sculptor has been teaching **Pat Carr's** 3D art class for a few weeks now. This is a first for students at Cave Spring High School who are getting the opportunity to learn to sculpt stone from Geer.

Carr was able to conduct this project with her students after applying for a Grant from the Roanoke County Education Foundation and Earth Friendly Fundraising. Carr said she tied the project into the Olympics where stone carving has become very popular and the Innuksuk, a stone landmark or cairn built by the Inuit, Inupiat, Kalaallit, Yupik, and other peoples of the Arctic region of North America.

Geer is also native American Indian. She has been sculpting for 20 years and became interested in carving after attending a class at Virginia Western Community College.

"The first thing I ever sculpted was a totem pole when I was little," Geer said. "I was in love. 3D art was my thing."

Geer said she's focused on three things while teaching the students stone sculpting, how to protect themselves, how to use the tools, and sanding and finishing.

"The major thing I teach them is don't have something that takes away from the sculpture- or it's wrong. The sensuality of the stone is amazing. It's so smooth."

Carr said, "We are encouraged to do fundraisers and grants and I was in Canada and saw so many carins and then saw it at the Olympics. I was thinking how can we do a project on Native Americans."

So she applied for the grant and got it.

"Rocks are kind of special to me and I didn't realize it at first. TI have a stone wall in my house and my husband always carried a rock in his pocket and when my mom died everyone said, 'Pat, you're a rock'. It has personal meaning and I guess it's a comfort thing." Carr said.

Carr said that she contacted Geer because she knew she had taught stone sculpting at some teacher conferences.

"It was tied into pop culture and fits into ecology and the 40th anniversary of Earth Day," Carr said.

Carr said that after the students are finished carving, the Ecology and Earth Science students will analyze the properties of the stone chips. Geer got the Brazilian Soap Stone from Vancouver and it is the same stone that the natives in Canada and Alaska would have used.

Geer's work will be shown in the upcoming Open Studios event on Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 25 from noon until 5 p.m. This year marks the Tenth Annual Tour for Open Studios.

Her work can also be viewed at www.geerscreations.com