



MEDIA RELEASE

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Toy Project Teaches Students Design Skills, Empathy

Pacific Crest Middle School students design therapeutic toys for 5-year-old Sparrow

This week 5-year-old Maevin will get chance to see and play with therapeutic toys designed by students to meet her specific needs, the culmination of a project in Design and Modeling classes at Pacific Crest Middle School. The middle school students teamed up and spent weeks developing several dozen toy prototypes – all with Maevin in mind.

“The goal of our class is to solve problems that meet the needs and wants of other people,” said teacher Dan Curfew. “This project helped students develop empathy and design for someone outside of themselves.”

Maevin, who is the Sparrow for Pacific Crest, has developmental delays and is working to develop her fine and gross motor skills and balance, according to her mom Noelle. Maevin also loves people, having fun, music, the color pink and Mary Poppins — all of which the students at Pacific Crest took to heart when designing toys for her.

Students spent weeks planning these toys, building prototypes and developing presentations about them. This week, the students will share their presentations and prototypes in front of judges (Noelle says Maevin is expected to be at several presentations.)

“This has been a really wonderful experience. The kids are amazing and are blowing me away,” said Noelle. “It’s really cool to see middle school students thinking outside of themselves and about how everyone learns differently.”

Toy Examples

Seventh-graders Makenzie and Kendra created a Mary Poppins themed box filled with dried beans and shapes that Maevin would sort into various shaped opening in the lid of the box. They hoped it would help with her fine motor and cognitive skills. “This class lets you express your creativity and build and create,” said Kendra.

Seventh-graders Lexie and Cassidy created a large wooden structure with plastic tubing. Maevin could drop a marble down the tubes and watch it twist to the bottom. The pair hope the toy is fun and helps with Maevin's bilateral coordination as well as cognitive skills. "You have to make a decision about which tube to drop it in; you have to grip the ball and find it again," said Cassidy.

"Plus it's fun! I liked making something for her that she might want to use," said Lexie.

Will, also a seventh-grader, used cardboard and plexiglass to create a toy that is part Plinko, part color sorting game. "I liked thinking about what Maevin would need and how our design needed to help her," said Will.

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