



Instructor Nadia Packard demonstrates techniques for, from back to front, Heidi Jurski, Joslyn Jurski, and Ally Vossen.



Zach Patterson's birdbath includes snakes and a bat.



Joslyn Jurski places a ladybug on her birdbath.



Joslyn Jurski, 7, shapes a ball of clay into a ladybug to attach to the birdbath she's making.



PHOTOS BY LISA DUTTON

Ally Vossen, 9, perfects the message of welcome on her birdbath.



Finished projects from a morning family class dry on a shelf.

Clay date

Family Pottery Class means creativity and togetherness

By ANN WEBER
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Lucky birds. By now they're splashing in some very cool birdbaths, the products of a play date that four moms and six kids had recently at the 577 Foundation in Perrysburg. The proper name for their Sunday afternoon gathering at the pottery barn at 577 East Front St. was Family Pottery Class, a two-hour artistic adventure that's offered just about six times a year.

The miniclasses are squeezed seasonally into the schedule of ongoing six-week pottery classes offered separately for children and adults. "They're very popular," instructor Nadia Packard said. "There's always a waiting list for our classes." For the family sessions, "people come to spend some time with their kids and expose them to clay and a fun project." Her goals are to introduce them to pottery techniques, terminology, and

tools, and maybe whet their appetites for a more in-depth experience. Not everyone on this recent Sunday was a pottery neophyte, though. Among the participants were some old hands, including Ally Vossen, 9, of Whitehouse, attending with her mother, Michelle, and brother Bobby, 7; Chloe Patterson, 10, of Perrysburg, there with her mom, Jill, and brother Zach, 6; and Evan Thomas, 10, and his mother, Holly, of Perrysburg.

Joining them were first-timers Heidi Jurski and daughter Joslyn, 7, of Oregon. It wasn't long before the crowd began to swell, though. There were ladybugs, snails, snakes, and a couple of dragonflies. A fat goldfish, a fire-breathing dragon, a fierce little bat. Each adult and child started with an identical gray block of clay and ended with a birdbath like no one else's. They used rolling pins to flatten their block, fingers to smooth

rough edges, textured mats to create surfaces that looked like bark and pebbles, and small cookie cutter-like letters to imprint words. One wrote out "Welcome," another, "Hi Birdies." They shaped scraps of clay into decorative pieces they attached with vinegar — "our glue," Mrs. Packard said — and applied color with liquid clay. Bent over their creations, adults and children worked quietly and intently. Moms

helped kids, as you'd expect, but help flowed the other way too. "What do I do when the clay starts drying out?," Ms. Patterson asked Chloe. Wet it with a little vinegar, she suggested. In the end, everyone had a masterpiece. "There's no 'wrong' in art," Mrs. Vossen said. "That's what I tell my kids."

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Zach Patterson, 6, squeezes clay through a garlic press to create strands for a bird's nest.



Bobby Vossen, 7, and his mom, Michelle Vossen, flatten their blocks of clay as the first step in creating a birdbath.