

# GREENBELT News Review

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## Puppets Will Help Teach Arts to GES Students

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by Barbara Simon

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Students at Greenbelt Elementary School this winter and spring will explore the world of puppetry with Ingrid C. Hass and Ole Hass, who will be performing puppet plays and leading workshops with every grade beginning with kindergarten. The Hasses, who have formed Beech Tree Puppets, will engage children in an art form that combines writing, acting, music and the visual arts. This series of projects is funded by a grant from the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council and by the school PTA, which received a gift of \$1,000 from the grandmother of a student at the school. The donation has been designated for an artist residency, which al-

lows the Hasses to work in-depth over many months.

Ole and Ingrid are passionate about the way puppets engage children of all ages, bringing a sense of wonder to a story or subject. Puppets break down barriers and cross cultural differences and open students to new ideas. The possibilities of using puppets in education are boundless.

Children in kindergarten, first and second grades at Greenbelt Elementary School will see "The Hollow Stump," a rod puppet performance based on the Russian folk tale "The Mitten" that features forest animals, each with

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its own character expressed in poetry and song. Kindergarten students will then create talking bears and other animal characters of their own, and the first grade classes will develop writing projects that relate to the performance. Second grade students will make puppets inspired by their own poetry. They will then present a show interweaving their poetry and puppets for the kindergarten and first grade classes. "The Hollow Stump" performances and the second grade workshops are funded by the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council grant.

Ingrid will be bringing back to the school a previous puppet program as well. In the spring, first grade children will see "Butterfly Wonder" and make caterpillar and butterfly puppets to retell the story of transformation and life cycles. The third grade will see "The Giant Turnip," performed by Beech Tree Puppets. The students will then create puppets of their own and write their own fables, which they will perform for their classmates. Ingrid hopes to expand the project to add dimensions of setting and character development, while classroom teachers are working on additional ways to use the puppets, building on the stories and the characters the students have created.

In January, about the time of Lunar New Year celebrations, fourth and fifth grade students will learn about traditional Chinese shadow puppets, and then make their own puppets and create a show about the Chinese zodiac. They will also see a performance of "The Giant Turnip," which uses shadow puppet elements extensively to show what takes place under the ground as the turnip in the tale grows.

Ingrid and Ole hope to be able to continue their puppetry projects at Greenbelt Elementary School in the future. Inspired by the gift from the grandmother that made so much of their residency possible this year, the Greenbelt Association for the Visual Arts has partnered with the school PTA to create the Family Fund for the Arts at Greenbelt Elementary School. The fund hopes to bring more local artists to the school in future long-term residencies, as well as allow the Hasses to reach more children there each year.



Ole and Ingrid Hass working their puppets.