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10-2020

Renaissance Kids architecture camp 2020

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Mbalil Majola

▲ Luyanda "Lulu" Majola, a Renaissance Kid who participated in South Africa, displays the bridge she built.

Renaissance Kids architecture camp 2020

This past summer, the Andrews University School of Architecture & Interior Design held their 14th annual Renaissance Kids architecture camp. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Renaissance Kids took a new form — the "Household Edition," a remote learning but hands-on experience for kids ages 5 to 16 to learn about architecture, art and design. The theme, "Kids Making a Stand," referred to the main project of designing and building lemonade stands, inspired by Heather Shelby, director of Kidpreneur Camp.

Participants joined from 18 states in the U.S. and four other countries: Canada, Greece, Mexico and South Africa. Mark Moreno, founder/director of Renaissance Kids and associate professor of Architecture, with a team of Andrews University Architecture students, met with the kids

every Monday, Wednesday and Friday via Zoom.

In planning their lemonade stands, logos and menus, the kids were encouraged to create the most enjoyable experience possible for sellers, buyers and bystanders. They also were challenged to design the stands to connect people — to nature, to choices and to each other.

Dorcas Hakiza, a fourth-year Architecture student assisting with Renaissance Kids, describes the process. "Kids designed their own stands and shared them in an online platform called Conceptboard where ideas from one child naturally get picked up by another one. Then, in Zoom sessions, we collaboratively massaged the designs into blends of them all."

She adds, "From Ella's Mr. Tart logo design came Abigail's idea to make the stand look

like a lemon. And if you have a giant lemon, it made sense that there would need to be a giant straw. Of course, from the straw would come blowing bubbles, music and/or wafting dry ice mist over merchant and customers to cool them down. Someone's picture idea of a bowl for dog treats led to providing a seat for grandma to sit and hang out. We came up with several different and very sweet, not sour, designs."

Over the course of the summer, the group was also joined by a variety of professional guests from all over the world. The kids had live tours of architects' private homes and landscapes in Fort Worth, the new Disney Star Wars Hotel in Orlando, and mixed-use urban buildings in Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh. They even had an architect in Rome give them a bike tour of the streets and a quick walk-through of the Pantheon.

In addition to these virtual tours, the kids completed a variety of building and design projects including bridges and structures that could safely carry an egg.

While the kids were not able to build their lemonade stands together this year due to COVID-19, Moreno is committed to getting one built in the fall.

"The camp, in person and online, has been a blessing, and I believe I could not be doing anything better at this time in my life," says Moreno. "I know we haven't solved the world's problems, but if we teach our kids that they can make a positive difference in the world then they will be better equipped to move forward in confidence." ■

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