

A NEW TEACHER TRADE

Three teachers picked up unique hobbies over quarantine

by peyton moore

HEARING ABOUT YOUR teachers lounging around all quarantine and knitting is almost as likely as you picking up a chemistry book and reciting the periodic table. Our SME teachers certainly spent some time during our extended vacation watching “Tiger King” and mastering Canvas, but that wasn’t all. From creating melted metal masterpieces to skyping with Arabic teachers from across the world, the SME staff took advantage of their six-month summer.



LANGUAGE

AS A SPANISH teacher, Dr. Finnie has always loved languages. He used his quarantine to expand his cultural knowledge by taking Hebrew, Arabic and Portuguese.

After hearing about italki.com, a language tutoring site, Finnie decided it was time to broaden his knowledge by taking beginner courses. Much like a dating site, Finnie could look through the thousands of teacher profiles — including introductory videos, reviews from other students and a short blurb about their tutoring style to see which one could be the best fit.

Finnie met once a week with each tutor via Skype. Since people all over the world are using italki.com, Finnie had tutors from Israel, Rio and Germany.

“With my Portuguese tutor, we would just have conversations where I could rely on my Spanish,” Finnie explained. “I would

fluke a word or mispronounce and the tutor would correct me and move on. It was really kinda cool.”

Considering that Portuguese is so similar to Spanish, Finnie is now almost fluent.

However, Finnie was not as successful in the confusing language of Arabic. Finnie only retained the basics in tutoring, such as going over the alphabet and the occasional ‘Hi how are you?’

Finnie used his free time to practice what his tutors had been teaching on sites like Duolingo and Mango Language, hoping the language would stick until December. Finnie had a trip planned to Israel where he was preparing to use his new knowledge. Unfortunately due to COVID-19, the dream is postponed, but he plans to use the time to continue learning and be versed enough to find a bathroom or even order off a menu.

WHEN HER FIFTH metal yard sign had to graduate to the trash, SME math teacher Jennifer Horn decided the startup of her welding career was well overdue. After taking an in-person welding class in late January from Hammerspacehobby, a community workshop for all DIY-ers, Horn had all the skills to create personalized yard signs to sick in front of her lake house. All she needed was a welding machine.

“The welding class was a one night, three-hour class,” Horn said. “It was a beginner class, but we got to learn enough knowledge to be dangerous.”

During Horn’s bored, get-me-out-of-my-house stage of lockdown, she decided to invest in a \$99 dollar welder to start her path in hopes of becoming a pro. The first couple of projects weren’t very sturdy and didn’t last in the yard for more than a few minutes. After a couple of weeks spent perfecting her craft and figuring out how to avoid starting a fire in the nearby trash bin, Horn began to create all types

of artwork. From longhorns to dogs to snowplows, Horn meticulously welded each using all different metals.

To get her supplies, Horn searched through the scrapyard of her husband’s workplace.

Every two to three weeks, Horn went to pick through to find her desired metals. Piles two feet high start forming, consisting of wrenches, wire, aluminum and more.

These projects aren’t the kind you try at home after little to no guidance. To create the melted metal needed to weld together the materials, a wire spool is fed through the gun, creating a spark. Then, that spark aids in creating a puddle that quickly dries to create the weld.

“Timing is everything. You must act quickly, but not too quick,” Horn explains. “The metal must cool after it is welding so these projects usually take about a month or so.”

Horn has begun to make yard signs for others throughout the community, but she decided that she will continue to pursue welding as a hobby rather than a second job.



WELDING



KAYAKING

BY THE TIME late May rolled in, Señora Holder desperately needed something to get her off the couch. Her students were stuck at home thinking about everything other than Spanish and her daughter was busy working in a hazmat suit saving lives as a nurse, so she needed an outlet of her own. After what felt like day 500 of quarantine, Holder spotted her year-old kayak rotting away in her garage and decided that the gathered dust was getting a little too thick.

The next day she convinced her daughter to join and bought a second kayak. COVID-19 not only made it difficult to find toilet paper, but made the kayak market extremely competitive.

“When I bought my daughter’s kayak, the prices were unbelievable,” Holder said. “Her kayak was three times the amount of mine, truly ridiculous.”

Kayaking leisurely on weekdays with some extra mother-daughter time quickly became addicting for Holder.

“In the middle of the lake, you don’t have any worries. No one around, no rush to get home, and nothing to do except relax,” Holder said. “It is the most relaxed you will ever be.”

To create the most relaxing atmosphere possible, Holder leaves out the little details when planning a kayaking adventure. If Holder and her daughter have a couple of free hours they’ll pick up their grabbags — a waterproof phone holder, a petite sham to wipe off the kayak at the end, easy snacks and a water bottle — and go. In Holder’s eyes, no plan means no worries.

Once Holder became a frequent kayaker at Shawnee Mission Lake, Pomona Lake and Lenexa Lake, she started searching for new spots to explore. Either Siri is listening in on her pre-kayaking conversations with her daughter or Holder picked up a penny heads-up, because the “Kansas City Kayakers” Facebook group happened to pop up on her feed. By joining the group, she found a bunch of new kayaking hot-spots that have now been added to her continuous must-try list.