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## Working the Levels in Carpentry Camp

By Jennifer Wake



Carpentry Camp students Seiji Minowada and Martin Olson on July 29 work on projects at the Orinda Community Center Photo Jennifer Wake

fix things?" she asked.

Students make their projects by hand from board foot of lumber, doing all the steps: measure, draw a line with a square, clamp, saw, rasp, file, drill, nail and saw. "It's great to have the kids for four days in a row; they can learn so much that brand new kids can become experts on the basic tools quickly," she said. "I also get to see the older kids that I have known for years who are now on the higher levels, but too busy during the school year."

Seven-year-old student Seiji Minowada has been coming to Cole's carpentry camp since he was 3. He's made items including a stool and a helicopter, and is currently working on a foosball table. "That's level 12," Cole said. As calls for help rang out during the camp last week, Cole nimbly rushed from one student to the next, often sitting on the ground, offering suggestions, unscrewing screws, pounding nails and working through problems with students.

"I keep busy," she said. "It's easier when everyone's working on low-level projects; high level projects take more time. It's great, though, seeing the kids every year get better and better."

Reach the reporter at: [jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com)

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With the smell of sawdust, the clatter of hammers and rasp of saw blades filling the air, six students in Orinda Parks and Recreation's Carpentry Camp worked diligently on various projects last week.

The summer camp has been a popular mainstay for Lamorinda kids for the past 23 years, with instructor Julie Cole teaching an average of about 15 students a week the last couple of years. "With 11 weeks in the summer, that's 165 kids," said Cole, a lifelong teacher who earned her secondary school lifetime credential from UC Berkeley and taught junior high school math before teaching carpentry. Orinda resident Martin Olson hammered nails into wood, after drilling holes into the foot-long board and designing a lever and pull for his wooden pinball machine - a level 4 project - the topmost level being 21.

"I think (the camp) is cool because you make things and you can learn to use lots of tools like a crosscut saw and a brace drill," Olson said.

For Cole, carpentry is a great, fun way to improve strength, coordination, drawing, and math skills.

"And where would we be without people who can build and