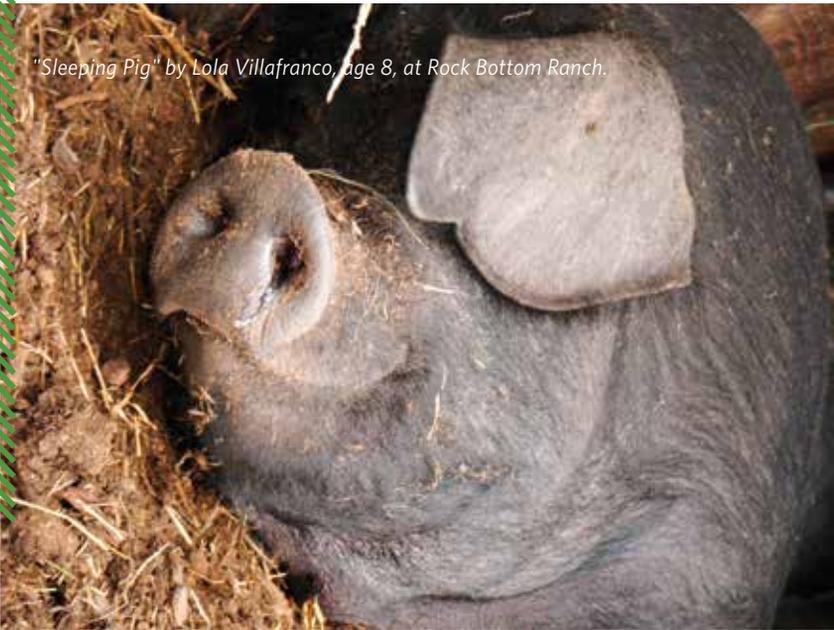




"American Flag" by Sophie Genung, age 11, at Willits Town Center.



"Sleeping Pig" by Lola Villafranco, age 8, at Rock Bottom Ranch.



"Maple Leaf on Rock" by Emily Adams, age 14.

If You Give a Kid a Camera,
MAGIC HAPPENS!

Workshops spark creativity and connections with nature.

ARTICLE NICOLETTE TOUSSAINT

What comes from giving a kid a camera? Curiosity. Creativity. Connection.

Cath Adams, of Gregg & Cath Photographers, saw it happen with her own kids and wanted to pass the magic on.

"I've been involved in photography since I was very young, and I came to a time in life when I realized that the purpose for having a gift is to share it with others," says Cath. "I love discovering, exploring and creating images with kids, and I have a strong desire to share my passion with them."

Cath and her husband Gregg developed a project called "If You Give a Kid a Camera - You Begin to See their World!" The couple has taught camera workshops for kids from age 3 to 18 at venues ranging from the Carbondale, Basalt and Aspen middle schools to a home school group called the Roaring Fork Home Scholars, as well as at Rock Bottom Ranch and the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. They have given classes to Boy and Girl Scout troops and to silent auction fundraisers.

The results speak for themselves. The kids prove pretty eloquent, too. After one workshop, 9-year-old Aaron said, "I feel like a pro photographer. I liked taking pictures of the green garden because there were fresh veggies and it was very cool to see. I feel like an explorer with my camera. It's fun being outdoors and getting fresh air."

Fifth-grade teacher Angela Buffo worked with Gregg and Cath Adams to integrate a social studies concept about Inuit rock art into a workshop at Basalt Middle School. The Inuits create human-shaped stone markers called "inuksuk". For the workshop, each child built one. The kids were then asked to create, photograph and

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"Sunflower" by Kendall Clark, age 8, at Rock Bottom Ranch.



"Sheep" by Aaron Adams age 11, photographed at Rock Bottom Ranch.



"Geese" by Wheeler Feer, age 10, at ACES.

explain the meaning behind their inuksuk. Jonathan, one of the fifth graders who took the workshop, offered this interpretation, "My inuksuk represents smooth rocks and wavy water. When things seem a little wavy, we can work with each other to make things smooth."

Photos and quotes from Buffo's class were uploaded into a slideshow on the internet so that the kids, their families and friends could view them. Buffo comments, "My students benefited from this workshop immensely. Many of my students would not have had the chance to take a photography workshop on their own, and this empowered them to explore their creativity with the digital camera."

Part of Cath's goal in creating workshops like this one has been to moderate the sometimes-overwhelming influence of the internet and electronic media on children. She says, "I want to encourage kids to unplug and acquaint themselves with the outdoors and to gain a sense of place by exploring our environment and engaging in free play."

That desire began with her own parenting experiences. "Gregg and I always enjoyed taking our kids out on hiking adventures and explorations," she recalls. "We marveled at how nature sparked their curiosity and ignited wonderment. But when our oldest entered middle school, we became aware of how much electronic devices were consuming the youth in our society."

In their business, Cath and Gregg specialize in weddings, portraits, events, editorial and commercial photography. Both began shooting pictures as kids. Cath purchased her own camera at 16 with money saved from teaching swim lessons and working as a lifeguard in her hometown of Conneaut, Ohio. Cath later earned a degree in fine art photography at the College of Notre Dame in Maryland. Gregg got his first camera when he was 7. His father happened to stop at a gas station where a sign read, "Free Camera with a Fill Up." That first camera led to work on school yearbooks and then to the photography program at Michigan State University.

The two met in Aspen on a photo shoot in 1990. Cath says, "We live in a valley of amazing beauty, and Gregg and I wish to knit together families, schools and communities through photography. We want to encourage a healthy, creative and active lifestyle. Our environment offers endless opportunities to develop creativity."

"What motivates me is seeing the excitement in a child's eyes and hearing the enthusiasm in their voices when they tell me they captured the best photo ever. It's watching tears of happiness when a mother is touched by seeing her child's images and reading their profound words of expression. It's being in nature, sharing cool experiences, having fun chats, listening to child's dreams and getting a huge hug because a kid had a fun day."

Parent and individuals interested in a children's photography workshop can sign up online at IfYouGiveAKidaCamera.com. Organizations may phone 970.948.3621 to discuss and schedule workshops. Greg and Cath will design private or group sessions to fit particular interests and schedules. They also offer classes for adults and mentorship programs. Their workshops are available year round.

Although there are variable costs associated with the workshops, Cath says, "We do our best to create affordable prices and other opportunities. We encourage businesses and individuals to sponsor workshops for kids. We wish to provide workshop opportunities to kids with special needs, teen parents, and kids diagnosed with a life-threatening medical conditions. We want to provide an opportunity for them to focus on the positive and discover the world around them."

A portion of the proceeds from photo sessions and assignments booked through Gregg & Cath Photographers, the Adams' photography business, are contributed to If You Give a Kid A Camera workshops.

WHAT YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHERS SAY

Kendall, age 8 - "It feels fun taking pictures. I like testing new angles. I took pictures of the chickens, pigs and the landscape. I took a million chicken pictures."

Jack, age 8 - "I feel that my pictures really show the scenery of the ranch. I take pride in my pictures. The garden was breezy, pretty and I also liked the smell. I feel that my pictures are creative and fun. I like taking pictures of the animals. I had fun and I really like being a photographer because you get to be creative."

Luke, age 8 - "I like taking pictures of the pigs. They are very cool."

Abigail, age 10 - "I took pictures of flowers and animals. I feel happy and joyful when I take pictures of flowers. When I take pictures, I express myself. I love to take pictures. I feel like a professional photographer."

Anna, age 12 - "Nature is beautiful and cool - capture it."

Isaac, age 6 - "I feel relaxed when I take photos."

Landon, age 3 - "It's just so much fun taking pictures with my camera, you should try it."

Steve, age 13 - "Photography is an expression of who I am."

Tilly, age 8 - "I learned how to take a framed picture, scenic pictures and how to compose shots."

Noah, age 9 - "I like to tell a story with my photos."

Ashley, age 9 - "I feel the freedom to be creative."

Rio, age 18 - "It's a great feeling to move away from the electronic world and really, really see the beauty of nature and experience the creativity with my camera."

