



News Release

301 Gervais St. • Loading Zone D • Columbia SC 29201
Phone (803) 898-4921 • Fax (803) 898-4969
publicrelations@scmuseum.org or visit southcarolinastatemuseum.org

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Contact: Tut Underwood or
Katie McLean

Exhibit Shows Talent
of Visually Impaired Jug Makers

Columbia, S.C. --- Face jugs are a traditional South Carolina art form that, because of their variety, must be seen to be appreciated.

Usually.

This fall, a mini-exhibit of face jugs made by students at the South Carolina Commission for the Blind will display pleasing and unusual sights created by artists who cannot view their work.

The exhibition, *Face Jugs: From the South Carolina Commission for the Blind's Summer Teen Program*, opened Oct. 22 to give the public a chance to admire 16 works by visually impaired students. The students began acquiring traditional pottery skills through the Commission for the Blind 2011 Summer Teen Program for visually impaired teens from across the state.

The partnership between the State Museum and the Commission for the Blind started with the Summer Teen Program in June, by way of the Commission's Woodshop Program.

"The program focused its clay projects on face jugs to emphasize that aspect of South Carolina art history," said Curator of Art Paul Matheny. "So they asked me to give a talk about the history and evolution of the South Carolina face jug traditions, which I was pleased to do."

The program created a tactile experience to hone the young artists' manual dexterity. Clay was chosen as a medium with historical significance to the Palmetto

State. Matheny pointed out to the students that face jugs were introduced by African slaves in the early South, and the tradition is carried on by Southern potters today.

During the program, the method of coil building and clay construction was introduced to give the students the ability to slowly build their vessels and create the faces, allowing them to express themselves through their works.

“Each student was successful in creating an individual face jug that reflected aspects unique to its maker,” said Matheny.

“This exhibit allows the public not only to see the creation of the face jug as a traditional folk art form, but it will raise awareness of the creative abilities of the visually impaired.”

The program was led by Gene Speer, who teaches woodwork, primarily, at the Commission’s Ellen Beach Mack rehabilitation center. “These kids have talent,” he said, “and given the opportunity, they can be very creative.”

The results speak for themselves in the series of delightful, expressive jugs.

Face Jugs: From the South Carolina Commission for the Blind’s Summer Teen Program can be seen in the museum’s education corridor through Dec. 11.

For more information contact Paul Matheny at (803) 898-4921 or Gene Speer at (803) 898-8741.

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CUTLINE FOR FACE JUGS

These face jugs, a traditional South Carolina art form, were made by visually impaired students at the South Carolina Commission for the Blind during the Summer Teen Program 2011. An exhibit of 16 jugs of this type can be seen at the South Carolina State Museum through Dec. 11.

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Photo by Susan Dugan/courtesy S.C. State Museum

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