

WITH NEWS OF MIDTOWN, DOWNTOWN AND EAST ATLANTA

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SUNNY SUNG / Staff

Friendship Elementary's **Stephanie Leyva** (from left), **Hanna Wheeler**, **Marlaina Choumanivong** and **Gussy Inman** try their hands at puppetry.

Hands-on taste of puppetry

By **JILL YOUNG MILLER**
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What would you do with a Popsicle stick, a tongue depressor, a chopstick, four brown pipe cleaners, two pieces of black construction paper, some tape and a pot of glue?

About 40 kindergartners from Friendship Elementary in Hall County got their fingers sticky turning the items on that list into creepy, crawly spider puppets in a workshop at the Center for Puppetry Arts.

Puppet-making workshops are a staple at the nonprofit Atlanta center

on Spring Street, and they come with the \$12 admission to the shows.

"The kids always surprise me with their creativity," said Damon Young, 32, who's taught puppet-making for two years. "It's great when someone takes an inanimate object and gives it a personality, and kids do it really naturally."

The workshops take about an hour and include step-by-step instructions.

Sometimes things turn silly. After pinching the pipe cleaners together in the middle and bundling them with a piece of tape, some children started meowing. They had veered

off the course of making spider legs and were pretending they were cats with pipe-cleaner whiskers.

Such moments delight Young. "They're going to become adults one day. I want them to remember what it's like to play."

As soon as his spider was finished, Dayton Colbert, 5, announced that he'd named it Paco. "My spider eats ants," he said. Kylie McGuire, 5, named hers Sparkle, while AraBella Lajaunie, 6, named hers Isabelle.

AraBella had this advice for other children who get the chance to come to a puppet workshop: "Say yes!"