



OpenSpace demonstrates use of new creative space

• MARILYN HALSTEAD THE SOUTHERN

MURPHYSBORO — OpenSpace sits on the corner of Candy Lane and 14th Street in Murphysboro, just in front of Carruthers School, in a small run-of-the-mill building, but the activity inside is everything but run-of-the-mill.

OpenSpace is a new makerspace for Murphysboro and the surrounding communities. A makerspace offers affordable access to equipment that can take an idea toward production.

“If you can imagine it, you can make it,” Brandon Byars, one of the founders of OpenSpace, said.

The other founders are Aaron Simpson of De Soto and Logan Johnson of Carbondale.

“This is my two-month dream. Who knows where we’ll be in another two months?” Byars said.

The space has two 3D printers, a laser cutter, a Raspberry Pi station, two vinyl cutters and two embroidery sewing machines. The public had a chance to try out some of the equipment during an open house Saturday.

The equipment was donated by New Blankets, an organization that helps libraries and other public organizations obtain the equipment to create makerspaces. They get equipment and donate it to the organizations to put into public use. The group donated most of the equipment at OpenSpace.

Joe Deken, president of New Blankets, said the idea is to make everything as affordable and open as possible. The group sets up equipment to use free software. For example, instead of Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat and PhotoShop, the group uses Libre Office, PDF editor and GNU Image.

“You really don’t have to buy software, anymore,” Deken said.

Deken was joined by New Blanket staff members Justine Pipitone of St. Louis, community outreach intern, and Shosh Gordon of Philadelphia, artist in transit.

They worked with visitors, teaching them to use the machines. Pipitone demonstrated making lace with the embroidery machine and helped Rebecca Walker and Angela Aguayo embroider their designs. Gordon helped Beth Davis and Eliana Peach create designs with the curio cutter.



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Simpson demonstrated the 3D printers. He printed cones and the OpenSpace logo. The printers can even print a chain with separate links.

Byars said they are working on a membership structure that would give people a code to access the building after signing up. They do have plans for several classes in February and March.

Introduction to Sketchup will be offered in two classes: 9 to 11 a.m. Feb. 20 and 6 to 8 p.m. Feb. 23. Introduction to embroidery will be from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. March 12. The classes will be free.

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