

came in and sat on some of the rugs. Piper explained how for centuries people had woven their stories into rugs using meaningful symbols, colors and designs. She told them the stories behind individual rugs, and how those rugs were used. She'd feared the children might be bored, but they plied her with questions. "They were so eager to learn about these other cultures," Piper said.

Afterwards, she asked the children to create their own carpet designs on paper, to share through colorful designs their dreams and wishes for themselves, their families and their world. They placed their hopes in the center and surrounded them with a border to keep them in. Sometimes they added fringes to the sides. "It turned out so sweet," Piper said, "that I thought their designs should be woven to be shared with the world."

She called Avci in Istanbul to ask if it could happen. "Of course," he answered.

Piper conceived the idea of a traveling exhibition that would include carpets designed by children from every state. She brought the workshop not only to nearby Junction City but also to Virginia, to an inner city school in Washington, D.C., to Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Mexico. Everywhere the response was overwhelming. "The story is what gets them," Piper said of the children. "They're interested in spite of themselves. They connect. Then they get involved and end up doing something that they feel good about."

Out of about 200 designs created by children, Piper took 20 to Avci in Turkey. He translated the stories and wishes involved with each for the village weavers, and the weavers responded with extraordinary warmth and enthusiasm. They loved the idea of weaving the dreams of American children. "When a child designs a magic carpet," Avci pointed out, "his wishes are sometimes similar to those of the families of weavers in Turkey."

So far, 12 magic carpets have been woven, involving almost as many weavers. Piper and Avci paid for these carpets. The other designs are waiting additional funding. "But I wanted to get it started, so it acquired its own momentum," Piper said.

The first two magic carpets were hand-knotted. *I Wish for a World to Dream on*, designed by Madeline Thomas (Marcola), is an especially wonderful piece. The other 10 are small, delightful

kilims. All are displayed next to the children's original drawings. They wish for good luck, happiness, believing in yourself, peace, following one's dream, protection, spring, new beginnings and "wackiness." They are whimsical, touching, funny and generous.

Avci's Dream

"My dream," Avci said, "is to buy a Turkish black tent — a nomadic tent — and bring it to the U.S. Instead of showing the rugs in a museum, we would create a traveling cultural exhibit by setting up the tent in various cities and using it to show the carpets in their cultural context."

This traveling exhibit would include traditional Oriental rugs as well as carpets from the Magic Carpet Project.

I Wish for Wackiness, magic carpet design by Anees Mokhiber, age 10, Great Falls, Va. I Wish for Wackiness, woven in Turkey.



Can this dream become reality? If adequate funding can be found, the other necessary elements — drive, enterprise, enthusiasm, dedication, energy, creativity — are already there.

A Note on the Venue

The Springfield Museum is a great venue and community resource, and it would take little to further enhance its gallery. Movable partitions could provide extra wall-space as needed, and more stands, especially higher ones that don't require people to bend over, would be useful. The current exhibition would certainly have benefitted. I also found the lighting spots erratic. Notwithstanding, credit is owed to director Kathy Jensen, to volunteer Nancy Karp who helped with installation, to Ram Meier who created a lovely poster banner for the exhibition, and to other museum volunteers so generous with their time and support. Such an exhibition proves the museum worthy of as much community support as it can muster — worthy of wishes and dreams.

For further viewing of high quality, rare antique rugs and textiles, you may contact Piper at magiccarpetproject@yahoo.com

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