

ROCK STARS



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN ROTTET

Richard Johnson, one of two masons building several garden walls at Glenwood Elementary School, uses a large hammer to break up rocks into sizes and shapes he needs.

and this was a chance to both see science at work and gain an appreciation for its place in Chapel Hill culture.

"Children love building," Massengale said.

Shawn Snipes, 34, brought a long sledgehammer over his head and dropped it hard, cracking apart a beach ball-sized stone and sending Massengale's first graders into a frenzy.

"Whoa!" the students shouted, leaping off their seats on a finished stone wall, mouths wide and smiling.

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STAFF PHOTOS BY JOHN ROTTET

Stonemason Richard Johnson tries out a rock to see how well it fits into the section he is working on.

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Four days ago, Johnson and Jones picked up Snipes in Carrboro to mix mortar and break rocks.

"It works the shoulders and the forearms," he said, "I sleep good at night."

Johnson and Jones are two of the remaining members of the black stonemason families in Chapel Hill, who date back to the early 1800s. The old stone walls on the UNC campus and at inter-

sections such as Country Club and Raleigh roads are testament to that tradition. But the two men say they have a hard time finding people to carry on their legacy.

"A lot of people out here are just slinging mud for the dollar," Jones said.

Snipes likes the work, but he prefers carpentry. However, Johnson's nephew could take up the trowel, and Jones says his 17-year-old grandson might be interested.

"He can pick rock pretty good," he said.



Arthur Jones uses a trowel to smooth out the mortar on the wall he is working on.