

FEBRUARY 2021

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# ROUND & ROUND ON THE WHEEL



MUD-STRUCK AND "KILN" IT AT  
WHISTLE STOP CLAY WORKS



**WHEN FACED WITH A MARKET CRASH AND LOST RETIREMENT FUNDS IN 2008, TIM O'GRADY AND KAY BOLIN HAD TWO OPTIONS: FRET ... OR HAVE SOME FUN.** Lucky for Loveland, they chose the latter.

The husband-and-wife duo retired from a textile company and were looking for another win/win chapter in their life—something selfishly fulfilling while simultaneously closing an art gap in the community they so loved. So, they bought an old, abandoned oil distribution building in historic Loveland and converted it into a pottery teaching studio and gallery. Whistle Stop Clay Works was born—holding its first class on June 10, 2010.

Appropriately named for its location next to the railroad tracks (as well as a nod to the old Whistle Stop Tavern), WSCW is a fully equipped ceramics teaching studio and gallery. Classes and workshops range from wheel throwing to sculpting for both young and old.

"Time spent at WSCW is truly a spiritual experience," Kay says, co-owner and now director of marketing of the studio/gallery. "It's like meditation and your own 'space' to relax, create and enjoy the company of other people with the same mindset."

Tim is no stranger to this mindset, either. He's had his hands in clay for more than 70 years. His interest broadened after replacing his love of mud pies with creating his own art on the pottery wheel and hand-sculpting.

"Working with clay offers many opportunities for surprises," he says. "Mistakes and failures are part of the learning process."

Tim encourages people who are interested in trying something new or getting out of their comfort zone to sign up for one of Whistle Stop's beginner classes. Whether it's a six-week course or a one-day workshop, he wants clay aficionados and novices alike to enjoy themselves.

"People make things that fulfill a need in their life," Bonnie McNett, WSCW's operations manager, says. "These things are usually functional ... a pair of doves for their wedding cake or a cremation urn for their father. Gifts are also popular—a set of dessert plates or a personalized mug. People usually come to us not having touched clay since elementary school—so we welcome everyone regardless of background. We are all on this creative journey together."

But the love of creativity and craft doesn't stop inside the studio. The WSCW team believes that art has a serious impact on one's life—and the community in which they live. It is this impact that has driven Tim and Kay's desire to connect their love of art with the enrichment of the physical, economic, social and cultural elements of a community.

Despite facing serious economic challenges in 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis, the studio still found ways to give to the most vulnerable. Knowing that the pandemic

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## ROUND & ROUND (CONTINUED)

**WhistleStopClayWorks.com**

119 Harrison Avenue, Loveland | 513.683.2529



hit everyone—especially the poor—hard, WSCW raised more than \$700 for the Loveland LIFE Food Pantry during its September Pottery Affaire. Auction items were also donated to several local nonprofits such as NEST and CMH Montessori School. On average, WSCW donates approximately 1 percent of its gross revenue to local charities, and is a major supporter of Mason Grange Empty Bowls' fundraiser—a yearly event that helps fight hunger in the larger community.

"In 2009, we bought the current property with the thought of configuring the space for 'dirty arts' ... painting, photography, glass working," Tim says. "As fate would have it, we met a young woman with her MFA in ceramic

art who had just moved to Loveland ... she was looking for work while pursuing her goals in academia. We decided that a pottery studio would fit well into the community ... that was 10 years ago. The studio has become a cherished resource for clay enthusiasts, young and old—and many of our students today are considered accomplished artists."

*Direct from the heart of WSCW's beliefs and goals, consider these six ways that art positively impacts any community:*

- 01 ART REFLECTS COMMUNITY VALUES**
- 02 ART CREATES A SENSE OF BELONGING**
- 03 ART DRIVES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- 04 ART CREATES A SENSE OF PRIDE**
- 05 ART PROMOTES DIVERSITY OF CULTURE**
- 06 ART ENTERTAINS AND BRINGS JOY TO COMMUNITY**