

A Shop Full of Rocks: *Rock Creek Rock Shop/Club Opens in Vernonia*

Neil Lloyd has been collecting rocks for a long time. And now he has a place to share his passion for semi-precious and gemstones with others.

In mid-July, Lloyd, along with his business partner, James Baraibar, opened Rock Creek Rock Shop/Club at 791 Bridge Street. Like the name says, it's a rock shop where customers can purchase stones, gems and other interesting rocks, many of which are found right here in the upper Nehalem River Valley. But as the name says, it's also a rock club-- a place where club members can come and learn about rock collecting and use equipment to identify, cut, smooth and polish their rocks, as well as facet gem stones and do other things that will make what appears to be just an ordinary rock to some people into a brilliant, smooth and beautiful piece of jewelry.

As was stated at the beginning of this article, Lloyd has been collecting rocks for a long time and over the years has accumulated quite a few interesting specimens. And when we say quite a few, we mean a lot! "I built a carport at my house, and it's turned into a rock

quality assurance for Boeing Aircraft in their tooling division, so he traveled all around the country. "On the weekends, I



would always be able to go out and hunt rocks and gem stones someplace. I had a chance to hunt rocks everywhere from the Appalachians to Michigan, to California-- all over."

Lloyd's extensive background is evident as you walk around the shop. He knows the names, and much more, about all the rocks on display in bins around the shop. He is also trained in faceting and in capashoning, meaning he knows how to cut angles and round off gemstones.

Lloyd's business partner, Baraibar, who owns Nehalem Valley Excavation, doesn't have as extensive a background in rock collection-- just a professional interest in rocks because he runs into them

all the time in his regular work and fifteen years of collecting rocks on the beach. "James started coming to me and asking me to identify rocks he found," says Lloyd. "Now he's really learning."

Both Lloyd and Baraibar are

members of the local Tualatin Valley Gem Club.

The Upper Nehalem Valley is a great place to hunt rocks, according to Lloyd, as well as fossils. "There is a strata running from St. Helens all the way to the coast that is full of agates, carnelian, crystals, and petrified woods. I've found amethyst crystal up Clear Creek. The whole area is great-- you can find semi-precious stones throughout."

"It's a fun hobby, especially for kids," adds Lloyd.

The Rock Club portion of the business will be open to adult members and children under eighteen who have parental permission to use the equipment. The club will include a short safety course on the equipment. Lloyd said details on the club were still being worked out, but he expected membership to be around ten dollars to join and then an hourly rate to work on the machines.

Lloyd says he expects to offer classes in things like wire-wrapping, arrowhead-making, silversmithing and other interests.

"Once you get started into mineral and rock collecting, you find out there's so much more to learn about," says Lloyd.

Now there's a shop full of rocks in Vernonia dedicated to helping people learn and enjoy the old hobby of rockhounding and all that goes along with it.



port," says Lloyd about the many crates of stones, agates, petrified wood, crystals and more he has in his possession. Now all those rocks are available to be admired and purchased.

Lloyd, a Vernonia native, followed in his father's and older brother's footsteps when it came to rock collecting. "My father was a rockhound," explains Lloyd about how he got interested in rock collecting as a hobby. "My brother, Pat, who was seven years older than me, bought a machine from Montgomery Ward and he started learning about rock collecting from the old-timers around here. I was little, but I would go out and hunt rocks with my brother. We had a five-gallon tumbler running constantly at our house. So I started out at a very young age."

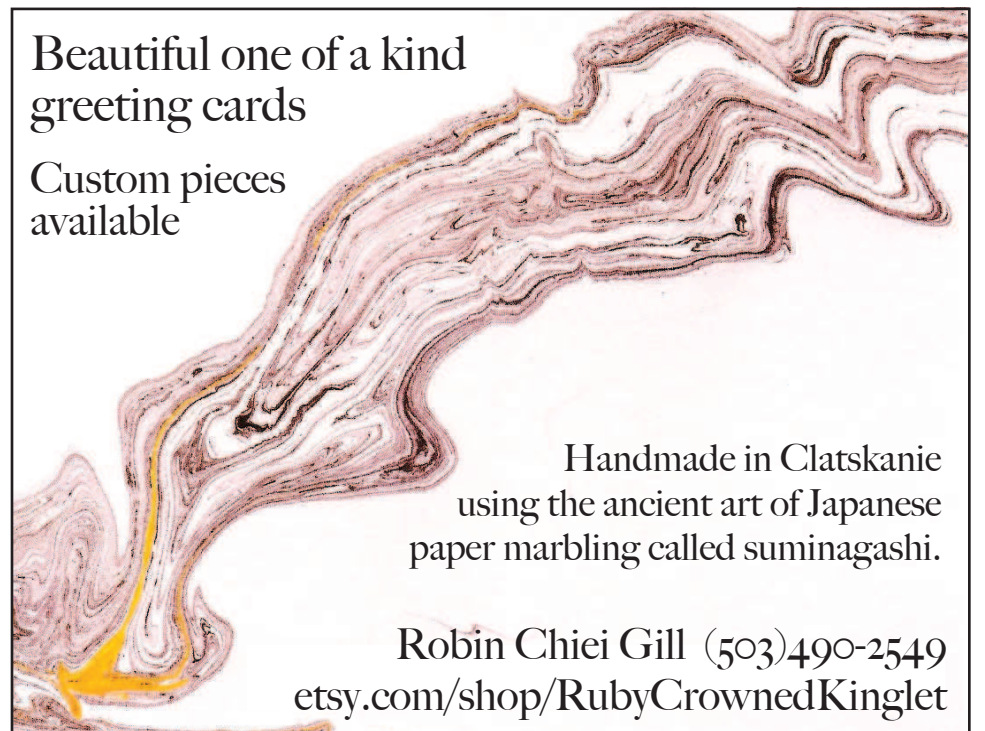
As an adult, Lloyd worked in

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**CORPORATE
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What: Community Collaborations Meeting

Where: Vernonia Community Church

When: August 25

Time: 6:30 pm

What to bring: Food dish. Potluck event.

What is happening: Come learn about the community calendar. Give input. Collaborate with other organizations in town. Let's plan on how we can be better as a community.

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