

FIRED UP

Longtime pottery educator shapes peninsula residents into creatives

BY PATRICK WEBB

The recipe for Sue Raymond is simple. “Clay is such a magic thing!”

The potter holds a doctoral degree and years of experience in the field. She loves nothing more than taking four steps outside her art gallery, cranking open the door to her studio and settling in to create whimsical characters.

She’s also eager to pass on her passion through teaching. Her mission is to encourage fledgling artists to take creative risks. She owns Bay Avenue Gallery in Ocean Park, Washington, and offers several classes throughout the year.

One weekday afternoon, Raymond’s class had officially ended, but the studio was far from empty.

In a cramped corner just inside the door, John Forder remained, hunched over a spinning potter’s wheel. The retired truck driver appeared in the zone, hands coaxing moist clay upward to become a vase.

Raymond managed to simultaneously commend the zeal with which Forder has embraced his new craft while not overtly supervising.

“It is amazing to me when the light bulb turns on,” Raymond said. “This makes me very happy — this makes me really tick.”

For her own project, Raymond used a tiny sharp blade to slice triangles of purple-brown flat clay and pinch them into inch-long clam ornaments.

“The clay really speaks to me,” Raymond said, as she poked in spherical eyes, intentionally making one larger than the other for a cheeky look.

“I love what I do so much — it makes me happy,” she said, explaining the importance of endorphins in the brain. “It is good for your mind if you can be creative. I am nicer. I sleep better.”

Learning

Raymond is 70 years old. She earned a drawing and education degree in Michigan, then taught in a one-room schoolhouse, an



Photos by Patrick Webb

Bay Avenue Gallery owner Sue Raymond concentrates on her work in her studio in Ocean Park.



Sherry Bosch of Seaview stands next to her artwork 'Sunset Beach,' on display at the Bay Avenue Gallery in Ocean Park.

American Indian reservation and a school with ongoing violence issues. After 15 years teaching other subjects, she switched to art

for another 20 years.

Despite rich credentials, her own education continues.



Patrick Webb

Sue Raymond gives her ceramic clam ornaments a cheeky look by making one eye larger than the other.

“I can learn from everybody. I love learning from other potters,” she said, alluding to the communal inevitability of the craft. That’s because big kilns — like Astoria’s dragon kiln — aren’t constantly fired up.

“Potters learned in community,” she added. “They ate together and made pots for food. Painters used to do the same until they started selling paint in tubes and they could go solo.”

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