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Pa. Guild of Craftsmen offers lots of classes to help nurture your creative side in 2019



KATHY DAMINGER | Staff Writer Dec 27, 2018



Karen Peiffer was a potter before she became executive director of the **Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen** in May. And of course, she still is a potter.

But being an artisan who creates in clay didn't keep her from taking a guild class on making silver rings — although she admits she was hesitant at first.

“I thought, ‘I don’t know. I’m a potter,’ ” she remembers. “But actually I’m wearing those rings today. I couldn’t believe that I could actually make a ring, and it’s actually round.”

Peiffer is pretty proud of those rings, mainly because she tried something new, something a bit out of her comfort zone, and she succeeded.

And more than ever, she wants others to share that same kind of feeling.

“People’s self-esteem goes up when they have created something,” Peiffer says. “When you can say ‘I made this,’ people feel good about that.”

While many people think of the Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen as an organization for master artisans and full-time creators, serving that community is only part of its mission.



Stained glass panel



Snowflake

Equally important is its desire to engage the community at large in the joy of creation.

To that end, the guild offers a variety of workshops and classes — including, but certainly not limited to, woodworking, metalworking, leatherworking, making glass pendants and beads, nature journaling, pottery, even blacksmithing and ukulele making.

“We offer workshops all year long that are open to everyone. You don’t have to be a member; you just have to be interested,” Peiffer says.

Peiffer estimates that by the end of the month, the guild will have hosted close to 325 classes in 2018. It plans to do at least as many in the coming year.

“We’re always looking for new things,” she says. “And we’re always looking for people who can teach new things, too.”

Most of the classes are held on the premises at 335 N. Queen St., which also houses a retail store with a rotating selection of members’ works. A few are held off-site at partnering organizations.

Next year is also the guild’s 75th anniversary and Peiffer is hoping to pump up its presence in the funky 300 block of North Queen Street.

“We’re trying to get some more high-visibility things going, have more First Friday artist demonstrations, for example,” she says.

The guild also will be hosting an exhibition by its Susquehanna Chapter during April.

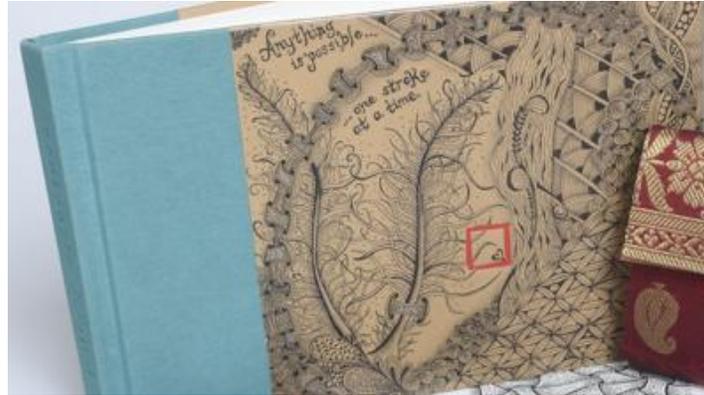
Peiffer also plans to pursue more opportunities to partner with community organizations for special events and to work with other nonprofits to help make the joy of creating available to everyone.



Druzy pendants.



Glass swizzle sticks



Zentangle journal.

“I want to push the community link here and to support our chapters as they push it in their areas,” Peiffer says. “That’s how people get to know us. I just want to continue introducing people to the guild.”

The Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen was founded in 1944 and today has more than 1,300 members in 30 states. No, you don’t have to be a Pennsylvanian to be a member, nor do you have to be a practicing artisan.

Friend of the Guild memberships are available to folks who want to support the guild’s mission. And members get a discount on all classes.

Classes are added to the guild’s website regularly. As of now, there are listings for classes through March, Peiffer says.

“Ninety-five percent of the classes we offer require no experience,” she says. “We have very good teachers here and they can help anybody learn how to make something.”

So her challenge to folks is to step out of their comfort zones.

“Before you think that you can’t do it, give it a try. I guarantee you’ll love it,” she says.

“And tell all your friends.”

IF YOU GO

What: Pa. Guild of Craftsmen

Where: 335 N. Queen St.

When: Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Info: pacrafts.org. 717-431-8706



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