

Richland woman finds herself as an unexpected artist

By Elena Olmstead for TCAJOB

Chris Blevins never dreamed of being a painter. The Richland woman never even thought of herself as an artist, because she couldn't draw.

Blevins, who has spent the last several years growing her love of watercolor painting from a hobby into a full-fledged business, considers herself an unexpected artist.

Blevins started painting just seven years ago and now her work can be found in various businesses throughout the Tri-Cities, as well as in offices and homes around the country.

"I got the idea in my head that I wanted to take a watercolor class," Blevins said.

She still isn't quite sure what made her decide it was something she should try, but after several failed attempts to sign up for a community class on watercolor painting, she finally got into a 10-week class.

Blevins finished her first painting in the third session of the class.

"I was so excited because I firmly believed I was not artistic," she said. "I had always liked color, but it came out through my clothing."

The class invigorated her, so she started looking for other classes to take. By the time her initial 10-week class concluded, Blevins had managed to finish three other watercolor classes as well.

For Blevins, painting was freeing, calming and almost meditative.

Before learning how to paint, Blevins



Richland's Chris Blevins never thought she'd ever be an artist, but taking one watercolor class seven years ago changed her life. Now Blevins' paintings can be found in various businesses throughout the Tri-Cities and in offices and homes around the country. Photo courtesy of Life in Pixels Photography.

life was focused on her business career.

She had gone to college, earned a business degree and was working her way up the corporate ladder.

But it wasn't until the first Christmas after she started painting, that she discovered her artistic center.

A friend gave her a copy of a book filled with watercolor paintings by Jeanne Carbenetti. Blevins liked the way Carbenetti used vivid color to create an ethereal atmosphere in her abstract paintings.

Over the years Blevins refined her style and painted as a way to center herself after a long day at the office. Then, just a few years ago, Blevins moved to South Carolina for her career – a big move because she had lived in the Tri-Cities since she graduated from college. Without her close friends around her, she painted more.

Blevins said she would often post pictures her paintings on Facebook and one day a high school friend asked if she could buy one of her paintings.

"I was really flattered," Blevins said. "But I didn't know what to do."

She said she didn't know how to set prices or even how to accept a payment.

But that's where her business background took over. She quickly figured out what she needed to do and set up the infrastructure needed to sell her paintings. Soon after that, she was offered the opportunity to return to the Tri-Cities.

When she returned to the Tri-Cities about two years ago, Blevins hired Sara Nelson Design of Kennewick to design a logo and create a website for her growing art business.

Blevins said the idea of turning her artwork into a full-fledged business was something that had been bubbling in the back for her mind for some time. But she was getting so many requests that she finally decided it was time to step up to the plate.

And it was about that same time that Blevins decided to put her business background in training to work in her art. She started teaching watercolor classes. That's just one portion of the business she is continuing to grow by offering classes at local wineries, through community education opportunities and through her Pampered Painter Parties.

For the parties, a host gathers at least five friends and provides them with snacks and drinks, and Blevins brings the painting supplies. Together, everyone will create a painting.

And while Blevins' work is typically found hanging on walls, her pieces can also be found on several wine labels. Goose Ridge Winery chose Blevins as their featured artist this year, so several of her paintings are turned into wine labels for special bottles offered to the winery's wine club members.

"It's just really a fun thing," Blevins said.

Currently Blevins still has a day job – working in a business that she loves – but she's working to grow her art business into a part-time job that will continue to serve her well into retirement.

For more information about artist Chris Blevins and to see a calendar of her upcoming class schedules visit her website at www.chrisblevinswatercolors.com.

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