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Cleveland Craft Nook, featuring locally made products, celebrates 2 years in North Royalton

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Todd and Lisa Allen launched Cleveland Craft Nook two years ago this month in North Royalton. (Bob Sandrick, special to cleveland.com)

NORTH ROYALTON, Ohio -- [Cleveland Craft Nook](#) is a showcase of locally made merchandise. And the store's owners know there is a demand for it.

All the honey in Cleveland Craft Nook is from area beehives. Varieties include creamed, raw wildflower and wildflower pollen honey, which is supposed to alleviate allergies.

The cookies and breads are baked by local bakers, and the salad dressings and sauces are prepared in this area, too.

Nonfood items include candles with aromas like cranberry balsam, apple cinnamon and pumpkin crunch cake. The store also carries handcrafted jewelry, darts cut from birchwood and journals with handmade covers.

Everything in Cleveland Craft Nook is produced locally by more than 100 vendors.

“We have to make sure we have a good variety of merchandise for everyone coming in,” said Todd Allen, who co-owns Cleveland Craft Nook with his wife, Lisa.



It's noteworthy that anyone is coming into Cleveland Craft Nook at all. The store -- at [13803 Ridge Road](#), just north of Ohio 82 -- was launched after the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) hit. This month, it's celebrating its second anniversary, an important milestone.

Cleveland Craft Nook is the second business the Allen's have started, and both are in North Royalton. They opened [Generations Antiques and More](#) seven years ago, about 500 feet up the road on Ridge.

"When we started Cleveland Craft Nook, we already knew the community and what was missing," Todd said. "At the antique store, we had outdoor events where vendors would sell antiques and collectibles but also handmade items."

At Cleveland Craft Nook, vendors selling merchandise pay a monthly fee for shelf space and they keep all of their profits. If a vendor runs the store when the Allen's aren't there, they receive a discount on their rent.

"They give us a day or two off a week at most," Todd said. "But typically, we're here six days a week, if not seven."

Antique & handmade merger

Todd Allen has been around antiques for most of his life. His father, Robert, dabbled in antiques as a hobby. Todd's interest in antiques waned, however, after he enrolled in The Ohio State University, earned a degree and began a career in human resources.

Todd met Lisa online when he lived in Columbus and she lived in Dayton. They married in 2009, eventually settling in Middleburg Heights.

Lisa crafted handmade items, including greeting cards, and sold them at a Cleveland antique store, where she eventually became manager.

One day, Todd visited Lisa in the store and witnessed the buying and selling. His passion for antiques was rekindled.

He attended an auction, bought a couple of antiques and resold them for a profit. It was a first step toward entrepreneurship, and he felt ready.

"As an antique person, you have to be mindful of the market, what people are buying and not buying," Todd said. "That's why a lot of the traditional antique stores are no longer in business.

"They were geared toward large furniture and other things that were popular in the 1980s and '90s. That's not necessarily the case anymore, not the type of product people are desiring.

"You also have to know the profit level you need," Todd said. "If you buy something at a level a collector would pay, you're never going to make money on it, because you have to resell it. You have to have a profit margin factored in."

Todd and Lisa considered several locations and cities for their new antique business. They chose Ridge Road near Ohio 82 in North Royalton because it was a highly trafficked area, not too urban and not too rural.

They were relatively close to Cleveland, but could also pull in customers from Strongsville, Brecksville, Parma, Brook Park, Medina and Brunswick.

Instead of buying and selling large antiques, hoping to make a killing, Todd and Lisa focused on smaller items that people can afford.

“I purchase it at a certain rate, but I have to sell it for twice the price I purchased it, and I’m obstinate about that,” Todd said.

“Other antique stores will mark it up higher -- at the high end of what something can be sold at. So I’ll sell something in two or three months while the other stores take six months to sell.”

Arising from COVID

The Allen’s sold handmade non-antiques at Generations from the start. That’s what the “More” means in the business name. The couple even hosted outdoor summer shows featuring handcrafted merchandise.

Then COVID-19 hit, and Generations shut down for two months in 2020. Lisa fashioned face masks with designs and donated them to charity. Then she decided to make masks for her Generations customers.

“She put out 20 masks,” Todd said. “Within an hour, they were all gone.”

Lisa kept making COVID masks as Generations reopened. People were so anxious to escape their homes and the COVID-19 restrictions that they flocked to Generations.

Todd and Lisa organized successful outdoor shows, where they required vendors and customers to wear masks and social-distance, in June and August.

Then, in October 2020, the Allen’s hosted another outdoor event with 55 vendors selling handmade items. It was the biggest sales day they had ever experienced at Generations.

“At that point, we started thinking about having something more permanent, because we saw people loving the handmades, and it was all local,” Todd said.

The Allen’s figured that since Generations was prospering in North Royalton, they might as well open their second business -- Cleveland Craft Nook -- in the same city. They wanted it close to Generations.

“We included Cleveland in the name for a little marketing,” Todd said. “It’s something else to do in the Cleveland area.”

A shopper's delight

Cleveland Craft Nook carries a variety of merchandise, include coffee mugs and sweatshirts. Vendors use a process called sublimination to add print to the mugs and shirts so that the print lasts longer. It doesn't crack or peel over time.

Vendors sell knickknacks and glasswork made of antique glass or glass that would have been thrown out. One vendor uses fractal woodburning -- the art of burning figures into wood using high-voltage electricity -- to make serving trays, coasters and even coat hangers.

"We screen the vendors on quality," Todd said. "We don't screen on price, but we want to make sure the prices aren't too high or the items won't sell, and then we're just collecting rent from the vendor and that's not fair to them.

"It's not good for us, either, because if everything is too expensive, customers walk out and don't come back," Todd says. "Plus, we want to have a mix of stuff that will appeal to everyone."

Customers can buy books by local authors, recycled decorative handcrafted wine bottles and even toilet paper with wrapping announcing things like, "Holy crap, you're 50."

Or 60.

It's just another a sign that everything works out in the end at Cleveland Craft Nook.

Read more from the [Sun Star Courier](#).