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OATKA School of Glass one of Batavia's best-kept secrets

By *Dan Crofts*

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Did you know that people come to Batavia to make landscapes out of glass?

Well, sort of...



A student of Amanda Taylor's four-day "Painting Images and Landscapes in Glass" course gets her creative groove on at the Oatka School of Glass on Harvester Avenue...



...while (left to right) Tessa, Sheba and Shiloh look on.

This is only one of many classes offered by Le Roy native Lance Taylor and his Canadian-born wife, Amanda. They both run the OATKA School of Glass and Glass Studio out of their work-and-home space in the Harvester Center. In these classes -- open to all ages -- they teach people how to paint using glass powder and "frits" (ground-up glass) as well as various other ways of turning glass materials into works of art (including bowls, cups and glass mosaics).



Lance and Amanda teach many of these classes themselves -- together and individually -- but for some of them, they bring in internationally renowned artists to teach.

"Some of our instructors have an international following," Lance said, "so we're able to attract people from all over the United States and from different countries. Soon we'll be offering a class taught by an Italian artist named Mirriam de Fiore. This is the only place she'll be coming to teach here in the U.S."

Many of the courses are for beginners. However, a lot of people have said that their expectations for what a beginners' course should be were far surpassed by the Taylors' teaching styles.

"All too often you see a 'shotgun' approach taken in teaching beginners' courses," Lance said. "In other words, students do a little of this, a little of that, and they don't really learn anything. We do hands-on activities where, for example, instead of doing many different things, people learn to do one particular thing very well."

Lance and Amanda are the perfect team when it comes to coordinating these classes. Lance approaches glassmaking from a technical standpoint, Amanda from an artistic one.

"The great thing about glass is that it's both artistic *and* technical," Lance said.

This week's class -- which began on Tuesday and extends through Saturday -- focuses on replicating photographed landscapes in the form of glass art. It is being taught, appropriately enough, by Amanda, who often looks to nature for artistic inspiration.

"A lot of times when I go for walks, I'll collect things like tree branches, rocks, etc.," she said. "I also try to be attentive to things that most people don't notice because they don't take the time to slow down and really see it."

Lance and Amanda are always interested in doing classes based on special interests, provided that requests come far enough in advance. For more information and to see a schedule of upcoming classes, please visit the OATKA Glass website at: www.oatkaglass.com [1].

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