

PATTY (Merkley) RUHE

A Passion to Paint: Building Lives for Others

Graduate: Class of 1985 Occupation: Interior Designer/Remodeler
By Khloe Vonderheide, Spring, 2010

Christian Friedrich Hebbel, a German poet and dramatist, once said, “Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion.” A Forest Park graduate in the class of 1985, Patty Ruhe has always had a passion to help others. Beginning her career as a teacher, she later had a career change in mind. To paint and design, she later realized, would become her life's work. Interesting and adventurous, Patty's desire to make a difference began directly after high school.

Majoring in geology, Patty received a bachelor's degree from Ball State University. While attending Ball State, Patty fortunately had many opportunities, provided by the school, to go on several field trips. Sponsored by the university, Patty then studied geology in many different parts of the United States. After four years at Ball State, she continued her major at Indiana University; she spent another four years there and earned her master's degree. Invited by a group of people she met in Bloomington, Patty spent a summer working on an archaeological dig in Greece. Along with her experiences, Patty encourages students, “Go overseas and study if you can. You will not regret it. You will realize how good we have it here in the USA.”

After six years of college, Patty moved to Midland, Texas, where she worked for Exxon Oil Company. She then moved back to Indiana where she taught at two different colleges: VUJC and Ivy Tech. A few years later, Patty began venturing down a new career path. “I found that sitting behind a desk was not for me,” she said. “I like working with my hands and creating something; it makes the job more rewarding.” From 2006 to 2009, Patty went back to school to receive her associate's degree in interior design at Ivy Tech.

In high school, Patty cherished her time in art class. Thankful for all the knowledge gained in those four years, she still puts to use the basics of art that her art teacher, Mrs. Berry, taught her. Creative and determined, Patty made a career out of her hobby by painting walls of houses with detailed murals or simply with a solid color and by designing home accents. For nine years and counting, she has loved her profession. Working with her husband, Brian, Patty enjoys her work to an even greater extent.

With every day bringing a new assignment, her unpredictable job never bores her.

Whatever the clients need or want-picking out paint colors, needing a room painted, adding shelves or wording to the walls, hanging pictures, installing new lighting, or giving personal suggestions-Brian and Patty try their best to please everyone. Searching the web for client necessities, such as floor samples or furniture, makes up the other part of their work. To fit a room a certain way, they also spend several days designing and constructing explicit pieces of furniture: desks, beds, night stands, end tables, armoires, etc. Incredibly proud of her accomplishments, Patty now sells some of her pieces from her own studio.

Along with her appealing career, she has two caring children: a seven-year-old daughter, Hannah, and a six-year-old son, Joe. A family who loves pets as well, the Ruhes have three cats, a dog, eight ducks, and seven chickens. In a happy state of life, Patty's words of insight for Forest Park students simply include, "Hard work! If you want to succeed, you have to work for it. No one is going to hand you your dream job."

Patty Ruhe can be contacted at rayruhe@netsurfusa.net . Pictures of her husband and her work are posted at www.pattyruhedesigns.com. Their company names are Ruhe's Home Improvement and Patty Ruhe Designs.