

Moraga Council Member David Shapiro's pottery hobby keeps the shelves full at home



Council Member David Shapiro in his garage/pottery studio

Some of David Shapiro's many vases on display at his home

Photos Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

Moraga's Town Council oozes with creativity as yet another member admits to an artistic bent. Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda paints, Council Member Steve Woehleke crafts furniture, and now, Council Member David Shapiro's talents come to the forefront as a serious pottery enthusiast.

Shapiro first got the calling at the age of 12, but it wasn't until his senior year at Binghamton University in New York that he was able to really "get his hands on" the craft. "You could take ceramics as a senior," he explained. "I loved it. We were allowed to go in the off hours to use the studio. That's when I started making pottery. I loved it, but when I went into law school, I didn't have much time for it."

Fast forward to 1995, when Shapiro and his wife, Tina, moved to Moraga. She saw an ad for a ceramics art class held in Walnut Creek and decided to enroll him as a Father's Day gift. Their private joke was that he'd "do it once and be done with it," but the joke backfired, and according to Shapiro, "Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon, you could always find me there."

Approximately eight years ago, Shapiro bought a pottery wheel and has turned his garage into a studio complete with all of the supplies necessary to keep him busy at home, including an electric kiln. This has allowed him to improve his skills immensely. He pre-plans what he's going to make. "I create first on the wheel and go from there," he stated. "It's all about making forms. I'm more advanced on making the forms and less on design. I go through phases. It's great to create for fun, so there's no pressure."

And, much like a snowflake, no piece is ever identical. "You never know what you're going to get," Shapiro said, especially when it comes to decorative design, which is pretty much left to the fates. He explained that he's worked with two kinds of kilns. His electric kiln takes one day to fire several shelves of pottery pieces, while Raku firings take only 45 minutes, because they use gas which heats faster.

"There's a whole chemistry aspect to it," said Shapiro, when referring to the chemicals used in glazing, something that he studied during the COVID lockdown a couple of years ago.

Every now and then, Shapiro drives to Truc-

kee Roundhouse, a public studio which is every kind of crafter's version of Disneyland complete with any and all types of equipment, but when working from home he frequents Clay People in Richmond for all of his hobby needs.

Shapiro's home is brimming with creations as further evidence that Tina's Father's Day gift has come back to haunt her. Vases, teapots, bowls, wind chimes, and an army of coffee mugs are just some of the items on display or in cabinets throughout the house. "Some of my nicest things are not here anymore, because I've sold them," he said. Unfortunately, he can never truly replicate those pieces due to the nature of the craft, and he has donated several pieces to auctions for worthy causes. The latest recipient of one of Shapiro's coffee mugs was a "Welcome to Moraga" gift for new Town Manager Scott Mitnick.



A handmade urn