

On the road: Missouri

50 Miles of Art showcases artists from Clarksville to Hannibal

The event April 26-27 unfolds along Highway 79 through Louisiana, MO.

BY LINDA F. JARRETT
Special to the Post-Dispatch

Mention "art colony," and the words conjure up images of intense men and women hunching over their potter's wheels or easels in the mountains of northern New Mexico, California, Colorado or Arizona.

No need to spend the airfare. A couple of hours north of St. Louis, a thriving artists' colony starts in Hannibal, Mo., works its way south down the Great River Road, Highway 79, through Louisiana, Mo., and on to Clarksville, Mo.

On April 26 and 27, the Great River Road Guild of Professional Artisans will present 50 Miles of Art, which includes a studio tour that allows visitors a behind-the-scenes look at how artisans and craftspeople use their skills to create art of all types.

The guild came about through The Provenance Project, an endeavor to bring in artists to live and ply their trade in the area.

Steve Ayers, who has been making pottery in his studio at 308 Third Street in Hannibal for more than 15 years, said the concept was simple. "You start a project to entice artists to move into the area. There are thousands of working artists around the country who live in the middle of nowhere. If they can live anywhere, then they can live here."

Ayers and Louisiana artist John Stoeckley began meeting with



Harold Shuler, H.R. Shuler Studio, Clarksville

situation," Ayers said. "They had done a lot of restoration. They were ready with vacant buildings, and this fit into a niche they had already built. The Chamber of Commerce in Louisiana has been reenergized, and in Hannibal, half a dozen artists have already moved in."

Thirty-five artists have moved to the area since the ads were first published four years ago. Ralph Heusing, program manager for Mainstreet Clarksville, the economic development organization for Clarksville, said, "We've had an ongoing recruitment program. Many of our artists are here from events we've had in the past, and some came because of The Provenance Project."

John Hamon-Miller, a third-generation glass blower from West Virginia, has had his shop, Hamon Handcrafted Glass at 115 Hill Street in Hannibal, for almost 15



John Hamon-Miller, Hamon Handcrafted Glass, Hannibal



Amanda Moon, Sunfire Pottery, Clarksville

As Highway 79 heads south toward Louisiana, the road dips and curves through lush farmland, then crests at the top of bluffs lining the Mississippi River, affording views of the river and valley for miles to either side. Visitors can take advantage of

landscapes and attractions in intricate detail in his studio, Reflections of Missouri Gallery.

"We're trying to create a cluster of artists along the Great River Road promoting ourselves as a destination for tourism," he said. "One thing we can do besides going after industry is to create small, individual industries creating art, be it pottery, glass or pewter. You wouldn't drive all the way to Clarksville, Louisiana or Hannibal to one store, whether it's an antique shop or an artist's shop. But if you know there are 35, that's another thing."

Sculptor Teres Whitney is renovating an 80 year old school where artists can work, show their creations and hold workshops. The school was slated for demolition

Street, close to the river, is home to most of the Clarksville artists, although many others are scattered throughout the quaint town.

Portrait and landscape painter Harold Shuler was visiting the area from Denver when his brother insisted he see Clarksville. "It was rainy and dark," he said, "but here was this empty storefront building and he said, 'There's your gallery.'"

Down from Shuler's is Sacre Bleu!, where Gale and Brad Bez create unusual jewelry. The Bezes also moved to the area from Colorado. Gale said, "We came out, talked to people and fell in love with the area. The cost of living is great, and there are no stoplights!"

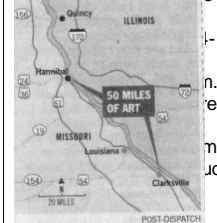
At Sunfire Pottery, Amanda Moon is just as

If you go

Go north on Highway 61 to Hannibal. From there, follow the Great River Road, Highway 79, south to Louisiana and Clarksville. Or start in Clarksville and go north. (Both Highway 61 and 79 are off Interstate 70, west of St. Charles.)

In Hannibal: During the same weekend as 50 Miles of Art, Hannibal will also be host to Just Girls Weekend, April 25-27. Shops will offer activities and demonstrations such as scrapbooking, wine tasting, cross stitching, pie baking and car maintenance. Tours of local attractions will be available. Bed-and-breakfasts are offering special packages for the getaway. For more information, call the Hannibal Visitors & Convention Bureau, 1-866-263-4825; www.VisitHannibal.com.

More information: For more on 50 Miles of Art, call the Hannibal CVB at the



including traditional American spongewear, a type of earthenware popular in the late 19th century.

Bill Gomel moved to Clarksville from St. Louis in 1993. Besides running an antiques shop, he makes handcrafted cottage and Early

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| <p>economic developers in northeast Missouri and city officials in Louisiana and Hannibal. Their first step was to place ads in trade magazines touting the region to artists who wanted a place to work at their crafts.</p> <p>"Clarksville was pretty much ideally situated to take advantage of the</p> | <p>years. "We've had artists from California, Oregon, Florida, the reason being that, for artists, it's not as expensive to buy a building here and set up shop. Plus, the location is central to many art shows."</p> <p>Visitors to Hamon-Miller's studio can see him take a lump of glass and, through a process of putting it in a 2,000 degree oven, cooling it, gently shaping it, heating it again, cooling and so on, turn out a vase, plate or maybe a paperweight.</p> | <p>several "scenic view" stops along the way.</p> <p>Artists are finding that Louisiana suits their lifestyle. Its antebellum and Victorian gingerbread homes give Louisiana the reputation of having the most intact Victorian neighborhood streets in Missouri.</p> <p>Stoeckley, a pen-and-ink artist, draws Missouri</p> | <p>when Whitney purchased it. "We want to fill the school with studios where artists can work and display their art," she said.</p> <p>Coming out of Louisiana, Highway 79 hugs the Mississippi River for nine miles south to Clarksville. Front</p> | <p>enthusiastic, saying that the artists who have come to Clarksville support one another and consider themselves fortunate to be living in such a "beautiful place." Besides terra cotta animal banks and unusual apple bakers, Moon creates other pottery,</p> | <p>American furniture. "We got here just in time for the flood," he said.</p> |
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