

# CHATHAM County Line

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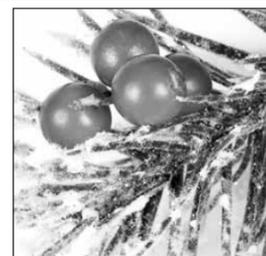
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## Four Studio Tour artists tell their stories

By Deborah R. Meyer

**R**usty Sieck, a potter, likes making things that are tangible. "I have taken time off and done other things that were more abstract and ultimately, come back to making pottery," said Sieck, who is #5 on the 22nd Chatham Studio Tour which takes place December 6, 7, 13, and 14 (www.chathamartistsguild.org).

"There is something about the quality of clay and the quest to make the perfect form that keeps me coming back to it," Sieck said. "I like making something that will be connected to people's lives and to their homes."

Sieck's studio and gallery, Chicken Bridge Pottery, is at 1469 Chicken Bridge Road, and if it were not for the signs, one might believe the structure was abandoned, not a home to wonderful treasures. Once a chicken barn with a dirt floor, with part of it being sort of a greenhouse, Sieck altered it by pouring a concrete floor and adding some roof joists, among other things. "It is a warm and friendly environment and when people enter during the tour, they will often find other folks sitting around and talking," Sieck said.

His work ranges from small coffee cups to large pots. "Almost all of the glazes on my pieces are wood ash glazes that I have developed over the years. Ash glaze means one of the major constituents of the glaze is wood ash, which in my case, means it comes right out of the wood stove," Sieck said. "Over the years I have added different colorings to get different effects. I would say it is mostly characterized by fluid, runny surfaces."

In between his third and fourth year of college, Sieck was backpacking in Europe when he fell in love with pottery. "I saw some old medieval salt-glazed pots in a museum, I think it was in Antwerp, Belgium," Sieck said. After college, he took a job at a production pottery place in Minneapolis where he swept the floor and loaded the kilns. "Eventually they let me throw pots too, and I got paid by the piece so I had to learn to do it fast," said Sieck who eventually took a job working for a



company that made replicas of historic pots including butter churns. "I did that for a few years then moved down here and started my own pottery business," Sieck said.

Sieck works in porcelain as well as stoneware, and he uses his wood ash glazes on both. "I get different responses. Colors tend to be a lot brighter on porcelain or more subdued on stoneware," Sieck said.

Making pots for him is rooted in the functional. "It is not that I am limited by this but my work is definitely informed by the fact that they are used by people and not just decorative," Sieck said. "I try to keep prices at a level where people can afford them so if they break somehow, they can afford to replace them."

Sieck finds that he uses the same coffee cups over and over again. "It adds a sort of layer of meaning and ritual to my life

to use these pieces. I think about this too — I want to make things that people want to hold, use, and cherish. Things that become a part of their lives."

**R**ita Spina takes things that have been a part of people's lives, works her magic, and creates artwork with these "raw" materials.

Number 23 on the tour, Spina lives at 12 Matchwood in Ferrington Village. "I go to the junkyard a lot," said Spina, who loves finding old pieces of wood to incorporate into her work. "Every year I go to Bish Scrap Metal in Siler City to see what is new."

These disparate pieces dance in her head, starting to fit together in her head before she even starts working on them with her hands. But how are they put together? "You name it, I will use it. Anything that will hold two or three pieces together — nails, screws, all different types of glue."

Spina has been on the tour since it began. This year will be her last.

When the tour is completed, Spina is moving to the west coast to be near her children.

"It is very hard thinking about it," Spina said. "The tour is one of my favorite things that I have done. But I am going to a place where I will have a studio. I will really miss all of the people who have been in the art world here in Chatham County. It is an amazing group of people."

Spina said that people are often surprised when they enter her home and see her work. "I am not a traditional artists and they will say, 'I have never seen anything like that,'" Spina said.

She is always interested to see everyone who comes in. "Some people will sit with you for three hours since they want to know a lot about what you are doing," Spina said. "Some walk in, turn around, and leave."

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## Reversing osteoporosis with yoga

By Tim Keim

A little more than two years ago one of my new yoga students told me she'd been diagnosed with osteoporosis. The question she asked next would change her life and mine. She asked me if I could design a yoga practice sequence for osteoporosis. She was also adamant about refusing the medication her doctor wanted her to take. Her mother had lost several inches in height because of osteoporosis and died a premature death because of the disease. Her sister is also afflicted with osteoporosis.

Surprised by her query, I thought for a moment and said I would look into it. As I began my research I got an even bigger surprise.

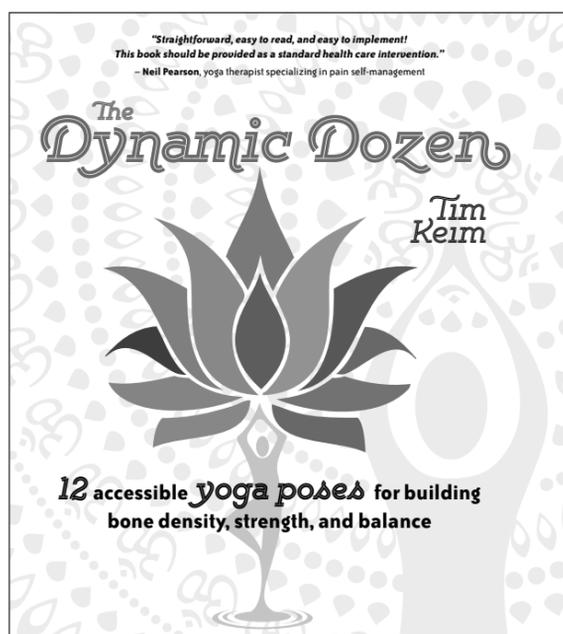
Osteoporosis and its precursor, osteopenia affect over 10 million Americans, most of them post-menopausal women. It leads to debilitating fractures, a loss of independence and diminished quality of life.

As I made my way through my search certain common strategies for treating osteoporosis with exercise began to stand out. Weight bearing, gravity resistance and stress relief. Wow, I thought, this disease seems to be tailor made for a yoga remedy.

I also found clinical data provided by Dr. Loren Fishman that showed yoga did indeed contribute to building bone and reversing bone thinning. (sciatica.org)

Yoga postures offer a wide variety of opportunities to place the body into weight bearing, gravity resisting orientations. So, I encouraged Karen to practice a specific set of yoga postures that would stimulate her body's bone building cells, the osteoblasts, to start forming bone.

The next time my student, Karen, who was 65 when she was diagnosed, came to class I shared my findings with her. She took up the challenge eagerly. Karen came to class every week and practiced nearly every day at home. After just a year of devoted practice, Karen returned for her annual bone scan. Her hope was to be able to maintain the bone density she had. Her hopes were misplaced. Karen gained eight percent bone density in her spine and 11/2 percent in her femurs. Of course, she was ecstatic. Karen had gained enough bone density to get below the bone fracture threshold and no longer had osteoporosis. She was reversing her bone thinning disease. The only variable in her life was yoga.



Another of my students, a 64 year-old woman, reported similar results.

So, how does yoga work to help reverse bone thinning? Medical literature recognizes the benefit of weight bearing. When the body is under weight bearing stress, the osteoblasts, the bone building cells, get the message that the body needs more support, and start building bone to meet the stress. Yoga offers many poses to put the body into safe, accessible poses that will stimulate the bone building response.

Chronic stress can also suppress immune function. High levels of cortisol, a stress hormone produced by the adrenal glands, can also inhibit bone formation and contribute to osteoporosis.

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## Need begets a local creative venture

By Deborah R. Meyer

When the economy tanked, few escaped unscathed. Ferrington residents Carol-Ann and Forrest Greenslade were not among those lucky few.

"My 401K got kind of burned up, and my wife's real estate business slowed down," Greenslade said. "We were starting to wonder if our money would run out before we die."

The couple started thinking about ways to supplement their income including renting out the small apartment attached to their home. It was where Greenslade wrote and created his artwork.

"But I had reservations about full-time tenants. We had owned a building once, and it was the worst experience of my life," Greenslade said.

Then one morning in late 2013, the Greenslades saw a news show about small businesses. The focus of the show was the shared economy, and it talked about some young men who, though they were college graduates, could not pay their living expenses. They got air mattresses and put them in their spare room to rent out to tourists. The men went on to found the Airbnb website that is now in use world-wide. "I started reading Forbes and other business magazines about this, and the more I read, the more I thought this was a good fit," Greenslade said.

The Greenslades checked with their neighbors to make sure that they would not be uncomfortable with them turning his studio into a place where visitors could stay. Then they got to work fixing up the space. The walls are covered with Greenslade's paintings and a bookshelf at the top of the entry stairs is filled with his sculptures and some of his artist daughter's too. There is a hand-painted dining room table and chairs next to the small but fully-functioning kitchen, a writing desk, and sitting chairs for lounging. A set of cupboards holds towels as well as books for visitors to use during their visit. Brochures about local attractions are provided, and Greenslade tells them about the vibrant, local art scene and

VENTURE CONTINUED, PAGE 10