

Sharing a Love of Stained Glass for 16 Years

by Randy Olson

Did you ever wonder how some people learn to make windows, doors, lamps, and works of art with stained glass? Chances are they probably learned the craft through Phyllis Gill, owner of Glass & More, just south of Clay City. Phyllis has been teaching Stained Glass classes at Frontier Community College in Fairfield since 1989. In fact, she became interested and learned the art of working with stained glass from Wilma Endicott, who also taught classes at Frontier.

"I've always been intrigued by church windows and sun-catchers," said Gill. "My friend Dorothy Kauble and I took classes together and I have been working with glass ever since." Gill now has students from a wide area, including Grayville, Springerton, Albion, Flora, Louisville, and Olney. The classes meet in the Richard Mason building on the Fairfield campus. "Many people attend in pairs, such as sisters, aunts and nieces, and couples," said Gill. "Many people repeat the classes again, so we become good friends." The classes at Frontier are offered as community education classes or credit courses and are open to any age. Students learn the craft and are required to make four projects in the beginning class. Many students make more items. The cost of the classes range from \$30 to \$60 for tuition. Some classes also require a fee in addition to tuition.

Despite teaching stained glass at the college for 16 years, Gill just opened Glass & More in January 2004. It's not really designed to be a retail store. The main reason she opened the business is to supply students and others with an interest in the craft. "There were no local locations to buy supplies," said Gill. "I travel to Chicago four to five times a year to buy glass because of the weight and the fragile cargo." Gill has a minivan designed with A-frames inside to transport the glass from Chicago. While she does mail-order a few supplies, which are delivered UPS, she prefers to select the quality of the glass in person. "I buy large sheets of glass in bulk by the square foot," said Gill. "I carry quality



name glass like Bullseye and Spectrum." Glass & More also stocks needed supplies such as bevels, foil, solder, jewels, irons, and tools. She also rents forms for making a customized garden bench that is made with glass and flashcrete poured into a mold.

The Gill family receives their electricity service from Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative. "In 1990, our home was hit hard by a tornado, and seven power poles in front of our home were destroyed. The Wayne-White crews worked overtime all night and we had electricity the next day," said Gill. "We are lucky to have the good electric service we have in our area."

Stained glass and beveled glass items make great gift ideas for birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, or Christmas. It is also a very beautiful way to accent your own home. Gill has stained glass doors and windows in her home, as well as customized lamps, clocks, picture frames, Christmas ornaments, gazing balls, sun-catchers, and

kitchen cabinet doors. She even has glass in her back-yard gazebo and stepping stones in the landscape, which students can learn to make. "My students are very creative," said Gill. "They can make just about anything with glass." One creative item that she showed me was a fused plate, foiled with stained glass around it, all set in a wooden frame. Gill says that if someone is looking for a unique item made of stained glass, she can make it, or find a student who is willing to make it for them.

"I'm really not into it to make money," said Gill. "It's a fun hobby that has just developed into a business. We have a good time." Her son Christopher occasionally helps her cut glass when not working on the family farm with her husband Rex. Christopher has also made a few items himself. To buy supplies or rent items, you can call Phyllis Gill of Glass & More at (618) 676-1307 or 839-2574. If you have an interest in taking classes, contact Frontier Community College at (618) 842-3711.



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