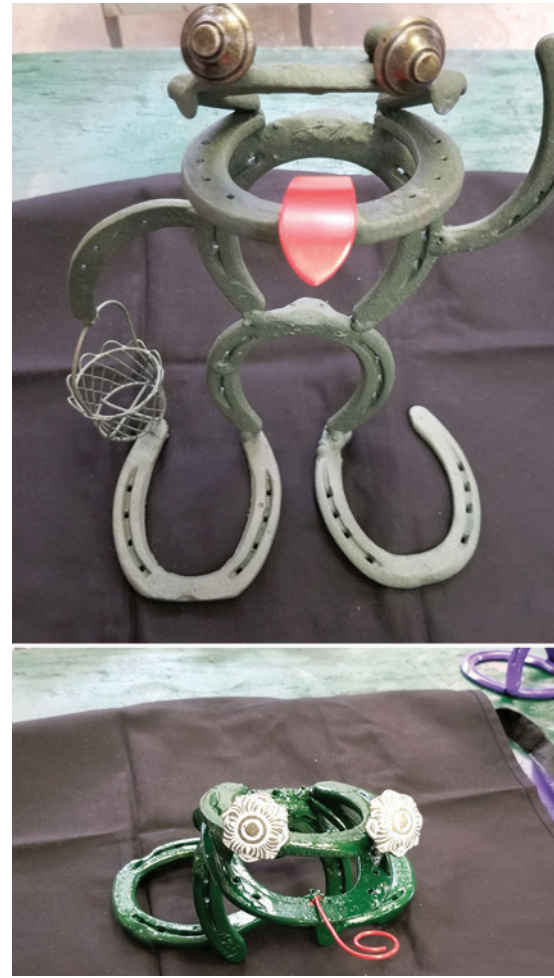




► Angel Watson, an assembler in Wire Guides at Park 48, with one of her sculptures.

Rocks repurposed, metal reimaged

Angel Watson's recycled art reflects her creative personality



▲ Pictured are some of Angel's creature creations. She uses materials such as rocks that she has found or horseshoes and car parts that she has welded together.

In the creative mind of Angel Watson, assembler in Wire Guides at Cook's headquarters in Bloomington, forks become flamingos, horseshoes morph into frogs, and rocks transform into whimsical critters, jewelry, and even trees.

About ten years ago, Angel decided to learn to weld, which is the process of joining together two pieces of metal by heating them to their melting point. She had watched her father work on cars, modifying tools to fit any type of mechanical need. A world of new creations was forming in her mind as she watched the sparks fly from the welder. Her father taught her this skill and made room in his garage for her creative art projects.

"My Dad was my encourager," said Angel. "Basically, if it sticks to a magnet, I can weld it. I find things and create something. Things that are thrown away can be recycled and repurposed into art."

Padlock pets and other welded things

The first metal sculpture Angel made with her new welding skill was a wind spinner in the shape of a flower. She formed the base with a tire rim, used springs for the stem, and the leaves were cut from an exhaust pipe.

She went on to weld an elaborate flamingo. The feathered body she made with a multitude of forks, and a hand trowel doubled as a beak.

The flamingo's neck was fashioned with a chain, and its legs were old metal fence posts.

Frogs are among her preferred critters to create. She has welded horseshoes together to form frog figures and used "J" hooks from a railroad track to form the frog's face, old spark plugs for its fingers, and brake pads for the body.

Another sculpture, a human-like figure she named Sprucecilla, stands six feet in height. The sculpture is a welded mix of various car parts, fan blades, and forks. Sprucecilla, a unique, metallic wonder, rests contentedly outside her parents' house as yard art.

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EMPLOYEE FEATURES

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When Angel found a pile of old wire cutters Cook was discarding, she quickly asked if she could have them. She also recovered a large quantity of combination locks that K-Mart was throwing away. What would she do with all of this weldable metal? Angel made a series of sculptures she called Padlock Pets. The sculptures' faces were designed with the combination locks, the whiskers were cotter pins, the legs were wire cutters, the bodies were old pipes, and the tails were crow bars.

More than just a rock

Besides using recycled metal for her art works, Angel discovered the hidden beauty of rocks. She had always been fascinated by stones and polished rocks she would see in stores, but it wasn't until she joined the Brown County Rock and Mineral Club five years ago that the world of rocks and their potential for use in her art came alive.

Angel has traveled across the United States with members of the rock club on various organized rock hunting trips. Recently, she went on a three-state tour with a rock club member visiting certain areas known for specific geological formations. During the trip, she visited salt plains in Oklahoma, searching for selenite, also known as crystallized rocks, and rose rocks, which are barite deposits that look like the shape of a rose or ball of yarn. She also traveled to Arkansas in search of quartz crystal and Missouri for lace agate, a colorful mineral rock of quartz combined with aluminum and iron, and druzy quartz, which is made of mineral crystals that often look like sugar crystals.

In a rock exploration trip to Michigan, she traversed the coast of Lake Michigan and found lightning stones, rocks literally formed from a fusion of sand made from quartz



▲ Angel uses small pebbles to create works of art that look like small trees.

and a lightning strike, and poteskey rocks, which are fossilized coral, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Rocks have become more like an obsession for Angel.

"I store rocks I find in decorative displays, filling bottles, baskets, and bowls. My apartment looks like a rock shop," she said with a smile. "I'll design jewelry from some of my finds or stones I just buy. Sometimes, I'll add googly eyes and accessories to the rocks to make little creatures. I make small trees from store-bought, colorful pebbles and place them on a rock base that I'll find on one of my rock hunting trips."

Angel generously gives away most of her art pieces to family and

friends. She has sold her art work at a church fair and will be making a presentation at the rock club, showing members how to create rock trees.

Her art is mostly a self-expression of what she likes to create.

"Mostly I make things for me. If nobody likes it, I'm ok with that," she said. "It's fun to make stuff that once was ugly or being thrown away into something that is cool and unique with a whole different purpose."

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