

Advertiser Highlight



A confluence of art and ambition

Upper Applegaters Leslie Lee and Dennis Meiners are looking for enthusiastic new owners for their HUMMINGBIRD property. The couple says they are ready to downsize after 20 years of creative expansion. "I think the correct term is right-size", Leslie commented. "We've put two decades of our life into this place but now we'd like to be back in a smaller space in an urban, art conscious environment... and we have a grandchild in Portland who is exerting a tremendous pull on us." Leslie and Dennis also say they look forward to passing the property on to someone who can "see the potential here and run with it."

In 1990 Dennis and Leslie, professional ceramic artists, who then lived in Portland, purchased an undeveloped four-acre view parcel above the Upper Applegate River and embarked on an "Applegate Adventure" unaware of where the road would lead them. Their intention was to build a studio and home out of adobe, since mud was a material they knew and loved, and to use the studio to support ceramics classes and workshops in addition to their own work. They wanted to create a place that would thrill the eye and hand and honor the ageless traditions of building with the earth, while also embracing energy-saving technologies. Between 1992 and 1997 they were helped by crew after crew of weekend volunteers who made adobe bricks and laid up the walls of what eventually became a 2300 square foot building with three separate work-spaces, two lofts and a small gallery.

Dennis and Leslie lived in the studio for six years and practiced their profession of art-making while they gathered their energy and resources to build a 2500 square foot passive-solar straw-bale home, finished

with earthen plasters. The house is designed for passive solar efficiency, with straw bale walls providing super insulation, south-facing windows and thermal mass in the floors. A large kochelofen masonry stove heats the home with minimal wood when the sun is hiding. The sun also heats the domestic water, backed up in winter by an on-demand water heater. Dennis says "The house will accommodate a photovoltaic array on the south-facing roof, and we think a wind generator would work well here, but those are options for the next owners."

As artist-owner-builders, Dennis and Leslie are always ready to share what they have learned about the beauty of passive solar building. They will advertise Solar Home Tours on July 17 and 18, but are willing give a tour most any time to anyone who is interested, as long as visitors call ahead.

In 2004 the couple named their property HUMMINGBIRD, turned their extra rooms into a B&B and began offering several ceramic and painting workshops every summer, attracting instructors and participants from all over the U.S. Most summers both Dennis and Leslie also taught workshops. By 2009 they had employed 19 nationally known artists to lead workshops and had hosted 168 students, both local and from as far away as Florida and Alaska, 30 of whom returned as many as three or four times. Speaking of her time at HUMMINGBIRD, Roxanne Hunnicutt of Grants Pass remarked, "I stayed in the B&B during several ceramics workshops I attended at Hummingbird and found the entire experience a respite, a sanctuary and a renewal...I don't think there is any place in the Rogue Valley that

is more at the heart of the creative community or as well planned for expansive possibilities."

One area of possible expansion for HUMMINGBIRD is the Bed and Breakfast business which at present might be one of the Applegate's best kept secrets. Since the couple's main business is the making and selling of their art, they view the B&B as a sideline and have done minimal marketing. "We are professional artists and value our studio time, but we enjoy our B&B guests and the time-spent/dollar-earned ratio makes it well worth our while to host those who

find us." In addition to tourists exploring Southern Oregon, local residents have discovered the B&B as a great place for a short retreat which could include art-making in the HUMMINGBIRD studio. "When my best friend came for a visit last fall, my very first thought was a stay at Hummingbird B&B," said Kristi Cowles of Humbug Creek. "Dennis and Leslie have built a profoundly beautiful straw-bale home and the breakfast they served, as well as their company, was unusually fine. Plus, the studio gallery is full of their exquisite art and they shipped pieces for my friend.

I owned a B&B for 17 years, and to my mind, these folks are doing everything right."

There are no Summer Art Workshops scheduled for 2010, but Leslie says, "The fact that the property is for sale has not changed what we do here. The B&B is more inviting than ever and Dennis just finished a new soda-fire kiln that should bring some exciting new work to sell this summer and fall. I continue painting and our gallery is open any time we are here." In conjunction with their July Solar Home Tours the artists will also have a Studio Sale. "People love Studio Sales because they get to see the new work that has not yet been exhibited, as well as all the work that never makes it to the gallery shows." Dennis says that means "some really great bargains on a few seconds, really reduced prices on oldies-but-goodies and new work that is really full price."

We all know the benefits associated with supporting local businesses, so when it comes to shopping for those wedding presents, surprising your spouse with a "stay-cation" or finding an extra guest room for your visiting aunt, it could be as easy as a ten-minute drive from Ruch to HUMMINGBIRD. Who knew???

You can contact Dennis Meiners and Leslie Lee at 541-899-7045, Leslie@LeslieLeeArt.com

Their extensive web site at www.HummingbirdSouthernOregon.com features their artwork and B&B info as well as lots of photos and a 15-minute video tour for those interested in solar homes or in purchasing the property.

HUMMINGBIRD
B&B, Home and Studios of Dennis Meiners and Leslie Lee

Solar Home Tours
of the straw-bale, passive solar,
artist-designed home at
12, 2 & 4 o'clock
Sat. and Sun.

**Open House
& Studio Sale**

Pottery & Ceramic Art, Paintings, Drawings
& Prints. Some mark-downs. Some seconds.

July 17-18 10AM - 6PM
8150 Applegate Rd. between Star Ranger
Station and McKee Bridge. Visit on-line at
HummingbirdSouthernOregon.com

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**Announcement:
Applegate
Farmers Market**

The Applegate Farmers Market is coming soon to the new Applegate Valley Marketplace at Eve's Cafe. We'll have fresh grown organic produce all summer long.

We're looking for local vendors for a Sunday Market, so if you want to set up a booth over the summer contact us at 541-659-5311.

We also want to invite all the small gardeners and farmers in the area who have home grown veggies and other goods to come and sell at the farm stand.

Rob and Pam Key • 541-659-5311