

## Comfortable, conscious clothing at Blessed Lotus

BY JESSICA GINET

Local clothing designer Serene Dussell loves making clothes. Her hand-dyed and handmade pieces give Serene an outlet for her creativity. As a child, she learned to sew in 4-H and started making clothing as a business venture 10 years ago, selling her creations at the Eugene Saturday Market. Her company, Blessed Lotus, features clothing that, as Serene says, “is comfortable and local. I make what I would want to wear.”

Serene starts with a large roll of white fabric and then, using her own patterns, makes each item individually. The process she follows is “garment dyeing,” in which the piece is made prior to dyeing it. Serene uses fiber reactive dye, which is biodegradable, works best on plant fibers like cotton and linen, and results in a permanent, durable and vibrant piece that can withstand multiple washings while retaining its color.

**“Fabric dyes, which I use,** use soda ash. I want to make earth-friendly items, and I have always tried to be as natural as possible with all of my processes,” Serene said. She spent a lot of time in the early stages of her business trying to determine the most sustainable method of dyeing her clothes.

Fabric dyeing is an art, Serene notes. She initially spent a lot of time working to get the colors she wanted with the pigments evenly distributed in each piece.

Every Blessed Lotus design is based on a custom pattern created by Serene. “I make what inspires me,” she says, adding, “Designing is the most creative part of the process.” Serene maintains an inventory of best-selling pieces while adding new patterns and occasionally doing custom pieces and special request items.

**Serene’s Blessed Lotus best-sellers** are her Trumpet Vine Blossom skirt (pictured), with a lettuce edge and rolled hem; her

Moondance skirt with an asymmetrical hem that dips down on the sides; her plain Back to the Root pants; and her Dancing Shiva pants.

Serene, who raises an 11-year-old son, Lakota, and also works part-time at Takubeh, a natural food and farm store in Williams, releases her artistic energy by making clothes. When asked what

she does in her spare time, she laughed, saying, “I would like to say that I run and hike in my spare time, but lately that [spare time] is hard to find.”

**“I believe that sewing is my art.** I feel inspired to sew. I want people to feel good with what they’re wearing. I think that if you feel comfortable and confident, that can translate into a healthier, more positive lifestyle,” Serene says. “Being totally handmade by me—I sew a lot of love into my clothes. I would like to think that the energy I put into them can affect people for the better.” She loves seeing her clothing on local folks. “Lots of people wear my clothes to festivals.”

**Serene has a strong conviction** for shopping locally. “We need to buy locally. I haven’t sent my designs overseas to be manufactured in Bali or China like lots of others do. I make what I sell.” She admits that she gets a thrill when she receives an order from overseas, though. “When I get an order from, say, Japan, that excites me, because I feel honored that someone in another country saw my work and is willing to pay to have it made and shipped so far away.”

Serene’s business is fairly seasonal; she makes the majority of her clothing in spring, summer and fall, working four days a week, eight hours a day to create her Blessed Lotus designs. Blessed Lotus clothing can be found in Williams at Takubeh and seasonally at the Monday Williams Farmers’ Market as well as

the Closet Catalyst in Grants Pass. Her designs are also featured at Trillium in Eugene. For those who prefer to shop locally while in the comfort of their homes, Serene sells the majority of her Blessed Lotus clothing designs on Etsy at [www.blessedlotus.etsy.com](http://www.blessedlotus.etsy.com).

Jessica Ginet  
[jessicaginet@gmail.com](mailto:jessicaginet@gmail.com)



Blessed Lotus’ popular Trumpet Vine Blossom skirt is made with hemp and organic cotton. Photo: Blessed Lotus.

## The Woodcarving Place offers classes

BY DIANA COOGLE



Jerry Greer, head carver and owner of The Woodcarving Place, at work on a carousel horse. Photo: The Woodcarving Place.

Pick up a knife and a piece of wood, take a seat on the porch or under a tree, and start carving. If you’ve taken a class at The Woodcarving Place on 255 East D Street in Jacksonville, you’ll soon transform the piece of wood into a standing bear, a landscape relief, a nineteenth-century Hitty doll—or whatever your imagination dictates.

If you’re very advanced, maybe you’ll be carving a carousel horse in the class taught by Jerry Greer, head carver and owner of The Woodcarving Place. There is one finished horse on display and three others under construction. Imagination even led one woman in the class to carve a carousel cat.

**The five teachers at The Woodcarving Place** offer classes in more kinds of carving than you knew existed—in-the-round, relief, knife, Acanthus (the Scandinavian style, taught by a native Norwegian), bark carving, print blocks, character, folk art, etc. For the carousel class, Jerry uses patterns from the big carousel manufacturers of the 1800s.

**Carving is a tranquil activity.** “Time passes quickly when you’re engaged in a project,” Jerry says. The popularity of the classes and the many carvings on display in the gallery attest to the attraction of a creative, tranquil activity not only in today’s world but in past societies as well. The mini-museum displays carvings from around the world; the gift shop sells Christmas ornaments, Victorian toys, and consignment pieces from local carvers.

Besides the carving classes offered by Jerry Greer, Donna Edsel, and Bjorn Heglie, Sandra Flowers teaches classes in watercolor and various crafts. The Woodcarving Place also participates in special events—a pumpkin carving contest for Halloween, an art show of different nativities for Christmas, help to the Cub Scouts with carving their Pinewood Derby Cars, a Christmas wreath decorated with carved ornaments for the Providence project, and a summer kids’ art program with an art show at the end of the summer.

**“Carving is a traditional art and hobby you can do all your life,”** Jerry says. “Some of our best carvers are in their 90s!”

In Woodcarving 101, students learn how to use the tools of carving—knives, palm tools, and mallet tools. All the supplies are provided, so the only risk in spending \$45 for a class is that you might not enjoy it—a minuscule risk, to say the least. With the class size kept to no more than five or six, with enthusiastic and knowledgeable instructors, and with lots of one-on-one instruction, success is practically guaranteed for every student.

If “success” is measured in enjoyment, every student seems successful. If it is measured in quality of the finished product, the success rate is still around 100 percent, judging from the pieces on display in the gallery.

**“Come and visit us,”** Jerry urges. “It’s a fun place!”

Diana Coogle  
[dicoog@gmail.com](mailto:dicoog@gmail.com)

Learn to carve a fish. Jerry Greer will lead a beginning carving class at the Applegate Grange. For more information, see page 16. Photo: The Woodcarving Place.



**Thank you from the Applegater!**

We appreciate you—our contributors, donors, advertisers, and readers—for your support throughout the years. The Applegater would not be here without you.

**Happy Holidays from the Board of Directors**

