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'The Many Vases of Angela Foley' on display

[Ruth Nerhaugen](#)

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Ten years ago, Angela Foley was one of just a half-dozen artists working at the Anderson Center at Tower View. When they put on their first art exhibit, they figured it'd be great if a couple dozen people showed up.

Today the number of studio artists who work at Tower View has nearly tripled, and crowds for gatherings number in the hundreds, or more.

As the arts program has changed, so have many of the artists — including Foley. She's no longer a part-time potter who drives a UPS truck for a living, but a full-time artist, business woman and teacher, a woman who enjoys sharing her creations and her skills with others.



Potter Angela Foley's face shows her concentration as she throws a 3 1/2-pound clay pot on a foot-operated electric wheel in her studio at the Anderson Center. She keeps the mirror at pot level so she can see the profile of the pot without constantly bending over. The Anderson Center will celebrate her 10 years as a studio artist there with an exhibition, "The Many Vases of Angela M. Foley," opening Jan. 26 with a public reception.

An exhibition in honor of her 10-year anniversary at the Anderson Center, titled "The Many Vases of Angela M. Foley," will be featured Jan. 26 through March 15 in the main gallery. Everyone is invited to a reception and opening starting at 6 p.m. Jan. 26. Pianist David Lee will perform in the gallery as guests check out a collection of her recent clay works.

Foley got her start as a potter during art classes at Ellsworth High School.

"I was going to be a painter," she said. "I was sure of it." When she saw people making pots, her reaction was "It looked easy." But when ninth-grade art teacher Lee Million required her to make one,

Foley quickly discovered it was anything but easy, and took a community education class to learn more.

"I was just stubborn enough to keep going," she explained. And the

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first time she watched a pot get fired, "then I really fell in love with it. I had to make some more things to set on fire."

Getting her hands into the clay also appealed to her. "I like projects I can make and do," Foley said.

After graduating from Ellsworth High School in 1990, she received a fine arts scholarship to attend Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In her final year she sold some of her work at art shows, and Foley went on to work as a pottery apprentice at the Amana Colonies in Iowa and at Clayton Pottery in River Falls.

She took the UPS driver job for the Christmas season in 1995 and ended up with a Red Wing route. That's how Foley discovered the Anderson Center. "I delivered a package here," she explained. "I wondered, 'What is this place?'"

When she spotted an ad for working artist space at the center she called, and soon Foley had a clay studio going in the basement. In 1998 she left the UPS job to become a full-time artist.

She realized, "If I don't try this now I don't know when I'm going to. So I jumped in with both feet." Two years ago this spring she bought a house in Red Wing — on Potter Street.

Foley creates both wheel-thrown Raku pottery and functional stoneware/dinnerware.

"Raku is different," she said. With Raku, a Japanese inspired method, "You take it out hot" instead of firing and cooling inside a kiln. The piece comes out of the first firing at about 1800 degrees, then is placed in a second chamber in a nest of combustible materials such as hay or paper, which catch fire.

"The smoke goes where there is no glaze," Foley said, and the firing results in interesting crackle effects and colors including metallic from the earth oxides that make up part of the glaze.

To her, "There is mystery and magic" in the finished product.

The shape is important, too. Foley's pots and vases often are described as "elegant and curvaceous." She talks of their necks and wide shoulders, their bodies and legs and feet as parts that help make her vases interesting.

Ten years have brought a lot of change and growth, the award-winning potter acknowledged. "There are many more aspects now," Foley said, because as a self-employed businesswoman she has to wear all the hats — lining up shows within about a 5-hour drive of Red Wing, handling all the paperwork and scheduling classes in addition to making, glazing and firing pots.

Recently Foley has been working on asymmetrical pieces, including wall tiles and landscapes. She's also creating large platters that use color in a different way than her earlier work. "It's more painterly, less solid colors," she said. Other current projects include Raku urns, jewelry boxes and small "secret keeper" jars with lids, along with glazed pasta bowls and wine bottle chillers.

Her work can be seen at the Red Wing Arts Association Depot Gallery and Abode Gallery in Stockholm, Wis., plus she'll have some pieces soon in a Minneapolis gallery.

Foley offers private lessons at her studio, or people can sign up for Red Wing Community Education classes. Beginners and advanced potters can "Watch the Mud Fly" April 11 through May 9, or sample the art in a one-night class on March 21 titled "Wheel-Wild." Call (651) 385-4565 to register, or contact her at her studio, (651) 385-7615.



Angela Foley's pottery goes on display Jan. 26 at the Anderson Center, where she has been a studio artist for 10 years. Her art pottery is Raku fired, which results in metallic or crackled glaze finishes. — staff photos by Cody Buckalew



Small lidded pots she calls "secret keepers" often are prototypes for Angela Foley's larger Raku vases and urns. — staff photo by Cody Buckalew

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