

Art Gecko Creative Studio opens in Downtown O'Fallon, Illinois

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O'FALLON - The Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville** is celebrating along with its clients, a mother-daughter team who has opened a creative studio in downtown O'Fallon, Ill.

Art Gecko Creative Studio, 125 East State Street, is the brainchild of retired art teacher Robin Springer and her daughter and fellow designer, Cory Hollerbach, both SIUE alumni. Their new business is the culmination of a dream for the duo that has already shared a lifetime's worth of creative, artistic expression.

The studio officially opened its doors on Monday, April 4. A ribbon cutting by the O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Thursday, April 7.

"I grew up with an artist," said Hollerbach. "My passion, and my mom's too, is to show others how to express themselves through art. Our studio offers classes and opportunities for all levels of abilities. Our greatest joy is assisting those who have thought they were never any good at art, and then are amazed when they see the beauty they've just created in our studio."

Mother and daughter teamed up to feature their hand-painted boxes for an O'Fallon High School craft fair last November. The two enjoyed combining talents so much, said Springer, that the retired art teacher and the stay-at-home mom decided to launch a business to instruct and encourage others' artistic talents as well.

The pair praises the generosity of time and business expertise given to them from **SBDC Director Patrick McKeehan**.

"Patrick provided us with an outline from which we generated our business plan document," Hollerbach said. "His assistance was essential to our launch. He thoroughly explained the process of starting a business and helped us work through it and progress to the point where we were ready to open. Patrick's phenomenal expertise came to us at no cost, which is incredible. We're extremely thankful to him and the SBDC for being a huge resource."

According to McKeehan, the feeling was mutual.

"I always enjoy working with the 'creative' entrepreneurs, especially those willing to share their artistic talents with others," said McKeehan. "Businesses like Art Gecko build a sense of community and add to our region's quality of life."

Art Gecko Creative Studio's mission, Hollerbach said, is to encourage children and adults to experience art in a fun, creative way.

Springer agrees. "Everyone has an art spirit within them," she said. "They just need to tap into it and try."

Classes at Art Gecko Creative Studio include: basic drawing, basic painting, printmaking and mixed media. The studio's owners say they hope to attract the home schooling community as a creative outlet to fulfill art requirements. In addition to formal instruction, the studio welcomes all ages for a menu of social offerings such one-hour Mommy and Me morning art classes, a junior art club for ages 8-13, an adult art class and more. Art history and art culture are also taught.

For more information on the new studio, visit www.artgeckostudio.org, find the studio on [Facebook](#) or call (618) 206-6222.

The [Metro East SBDC](#) assists start-ups like Art Gecko Creative Studio and existing businesses with presence in the nine Illinois counties of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is a no-cost service to the region funded, in part, by the SBA, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunities, and SIUE.

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the Illinois SBDC Network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs and encouraging new investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing no-cost, one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, connections, research and resources to small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large.

To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at (618) 650-2929 or sbdcedw@gmail.com.