

# Founded in History, Fused to the Community Rustic Roots in Wood River Gives Back

by Tara L. Cole  
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WOOD RIVER - Missy Bell-Yates has lived in Wood River all of her life. In fact, she has lived on the very same block for 47 years. She has had a variety of jobs and told me she has gone to school for just about everything - from nursing to architecture. But her

jobs were never satisfying to her. She dreamed of more. Something that would tap into her creativity. Something that could create jobs for others. Something that would help her give back to the small Illinois town she loved and called home.

Missy's sparked dreams were fueled by a raging fire during the many days she spent with her beloved grandfather as he worked tirelessly to build his own company - Worchester & Bell Construction Company. But then, that grandfather, who had been such an icon in her life and had basically raised her - became dependant on her for 24-hour care. She pushed her own dreams aside and cared for him faithfully until he passed in 2012.

"The journey for Rustic Roots began with grandpa's building that housed his Worchester & Bell Construction Company. The history of the building itself began in the early 1900s. It has been home to many small businesses besides his." Missy told me. "When he passed away, everything changed for me. I had to face that this building, so full of memories, was going to be sold. I couldn't imagine letting such a meaningful building leave our family. My husband and I decided to buy it, with no plan in mind. We would figure that out later."

Initially, the couple used the building for a storage facility to store work equipment for Missy's husband, Tim Yates, who owns Yates Quality Concrete.

"I knew this building had so much more potential," she said, "And I was already refinishing furniture and making some unique home décor. Plus, I had some friends that were also uniquely creative. We started selling our crafts, and furniture, in what space was available in the building. And Rustic Roots was born. The shop started to grow - fast. Soon we had to move Tim's equipment out of the building so Rustic Roots could expand."

Rustic Roots is a platform for many local artists and crafters to sell their products and creations. They retail a number of companies that support charities, recycle, repurpose and give back. They believe they provide a shopping experience that many other shops don't have - and their customers agree. They have been voted Best of the Best in the category of Local Boutique and have been in the top three consistently for Best Event Space.

"Our goal is to continue to build this platform and give back to our community. We expanded into the back of the building, and created a banquet space that we refer to as the 'Rally Room.' We rent the Rally Room out for different events. We have hosted baby showers, birthday parties, retirement parties, family reunions, and weddings. The Rally Room has the same rustic feel as the retail store, with exposed brick, metal and pallet walls, plus industrial warehouse high ceilings with a concrete floor."

When referring to the Rally Room, Missy said, “This building holds great memories for me personally, and all the staff here at Rustic Roots. Our wish is that here, you can create your own memories, and cherish them, as we do ours.”

Rustic Roots is a unique gift shop with so much to offer. A compilation of local artists creates unique items, home decor, custom signs, candles, jewelry, accessories, gifts, and much more. They have popular retail items such as Mud Pie products, and exclusive Milkhouse candles. Another candle line that is very popular is provided by Malicious Women ([www.maliciouswomenco.com](http://www.maliciouswomenco.com)). Besides the amazing aroma these candles offer, they sport labels that are cute and quirky. Made of 100% organic soy, the candles burn for 45 hours. Scents range from “Because Men Like Candles Too” infused with “Setting the Mood.” to “Let’s Get Naked,” infused with “Do I Need to Infuse This? Just Take Off Your Pants.” Like I said... cute, quirky - and a perfect gift item for any occasion. They also carry the popular Dixie Bell paint.

Literally, everything Missy Bell-Yates had ever dreamed of has been built during the rise of Rustic Roots. Even her dream of giving back. She is currently on the school board and is running for the city council.

“If you want to make a difference, you have to be involved,” she said.

Another way Rustic Roots gives back is by supporting other local businesses during their weekly Share-a-Shirt event. Businesses donate t-shirts with their logo on them, which are worn by the staff at the store. They post the photo on Facebook and everyone that likes both the Rustic Roots Facebook page and the sponsoring business page shares the post, and tags three friends are entered to win a shirt also.

Rustic Roots will be resuming their Ladies Night events this year that they were not able to host in 2020 due to the pandemic. Held every other month, generally, on the second Monday night (that could change though so follow them on Facebook), it’s a fun night out for ladies. Discounts are offered in-store, additional vendors set up, there are door prizes, food, live music, and even a cash bar. All vendors donate an item to be raffled and the money raised goes to Riverbend Family Ministries. Riverbend Family Ministries provides families and individuals the tools they need to be self-sufficient. They concentrate collaborative, holistic efforts on children, youth, and families who have experienced trauma - most often due to violence, addiction, poverty, and homelessness. The next ladies' night at Rustic Roots has not been announced yet but they will have a shopping event open to all... Sip-Shop-Celebrate... on Monday, March 8, from 5-8 p.m. There is no admission charge.

Rustic Roots continues to grow and is in the process of expanding the Rally Room. They are also preparing for the addition of a new business within Rustic Roots. Missy

did not yet want to let the cat out of the bag on what that business is but they will have their own entrance from outside, and also an entrance into Rustic Roots from inside.

During the development of Rustic Roots, many walls have been erected, and many walls have been torn down. Both literally, and metaphorically. It's part of the journey to the dream "What I love most is that people that I love, and love me, have helped me build this dream. Whether it's bringing in their products to expand the offerings on the retail side, to help when help is needed, or to just cheer me on," Missy added. "I certainly could not do this without my husband Tim, my mother-in-law Rosemary, and my team of girlfriends that always step up and pitch in whenever it's needed. And Grandpa. He was such a huge part of my life. I can feel him here, now."

Missy concluded by saying, "The building is old, it's rusted. Like many of my memories. But in turn, these are my roots, rustic or not. Founded in history. Fused to the community. Giving back."

Rustic Roots is located at 200 West Ferguson Avenue in Wood River. Hours are Wednesday through Friday, 11 am to 6 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. To find out more call 618-660-7766, visit [www.rusticroots-woodriver.com](http://www.rusticroots-woodriver.com), or find them on Facebook.