

L&C Grad Brings Inspiration to Macoupin County

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GODFREY – Pablo Picasso once said, “Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working.” It’s a mantra not lost on Lewis and Clark Community College alumna and The Macoupin County Art Collective (The MAC) Executive Director Brandace Cloud.

Hard work has fueled Cloud's artistic fire since she found her passion and graduated from L&C with an associate degree in graphic design in 2008.

"I attended L&C for nearly 10 years on and off," she said. "At first, I followed what my parents wanted, but found I didn't have the motivation to stay connected to any of the degrees I was considering. Once I took my first art class, I realized this was my path."

While at L&C, Cloud was able to work with former Jacoby Arts Center Executive Director Susan Bostwick.

"I was invited to help with the 'Riverbend Inc.' show," Cloud said. "I was allowed to photograph all of the subjects for this show and I was allowed to print all the pictures. It was a turning point in my life. Everything after this point was me working toward doing what Susan was doing at Jacoby."

Cloud followed her associate degree with a Bachelor of Arts in Photography from Webster University in 2011.

Her professional career began at the Edwardsville Arts Center, where she taught community art classes for nearly six years. In 2017, she jumped at the chance to run The MAC, which is community owned.

The MAC, located in Staunton, is a not-for-profit art school, where students can learn from a constantly evolving choice of classes, including, but not limited to ceramics, painting, jewelry making, quilting and stained glass.

Cloud says she uses the graphic design skills she learned at L&C almost daily.

"It has allowed me to create everything that I need for my everyday life at my job," she said. "Studying photography and having the confidence L&C allowed me has been a super huge help as well. I don't believe I'd be here today had it not been for L&C."

Not only does Cloud consider being executive director of The MAC the highlight of her career, she finds joy in teaching art to people in her community.

"I'm immersed in art every day," she said. "I help art educators find Continuing Professional Developing Units (CPDUs), which are difficult for them to find. I get to help people have confidence in learning a craft that brings them happiness."

Since opening The MAC, the center has found funding for Fostering Friends, a program that provides free art kits for children entering the Macoupin County foster care system, and After-School Art Bags, a program that provides free art kits to kids each week of the school year.

“The art bags have replaced our presence at community events due to COVID-19,” Cloud said. “These kids have expanded our mission to provide art materials to students.”

Currently, Cloud is working on acquiring an Art Bus.

The bus will be used to travel to small communities and provide classes,” she said. “Working out of libraries or local parks, we would be able to provide classes with equipment otherwise inaccessible, including potters’ wheels and sewing machines.”

Cloud encourages those who are interested in a career in art or graphic design to keep learning.

“Keep going to classes. If you hate it, find a different class,” she said. “Don’t worry about what others want you to do. Follow your passion. You will have to do this job for your entire life, why not enjoy it?”

The MAC is located at 115 East Main Street, Staunton. Contact them at (618) 635-2015 or office@macart.org, or visit their website at www.macart.org.

For more information on L&C’s Art program, contact Program Coordinator Chris Brennan at (618) 468-4669 or cbrennan@lc.edu.

For information on L&C’s Graphic Design program, contact Program Coordinator Louise Jett at (618) 468-4613 or ljett@lc.edu.

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Caption: Brandy Cloud makes art education available to anyone who seeks it through The Macoupin Art Collective.