



# **Rustic Roots is Riverbend East Business of the Year; Owner "Extremely Proud"**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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WOOD RIVER - Riverbend East Rotary Club recognized Rustic Roots as their 2023 Business of the Year on Thursday, July 20. For owner Missy Bell-Yates, this signifies everything her business stands for.

“It’s exciting and humbling and makes me extremely proud of what we’ve accomplished here and what we’ve done,” Bell-Yates said. “I love my community and I love supporting local, so it really means a lot to me.”

Rustic Roots, located at 200 West Ferguson Avenue in Wood River, offers a place for artists and crafters to sell their work. Hand-crafted jewelry, dishware, custom signs, bath bombs and candles are just a few of the products they regularly carry. The adjoining Rally Room Event Space is also available for rent as a banquet room.

The [Riverbend East Rotary Club](#) connects local business owners and community leaders. They select a Business of the Year to showcase small businesses in the community. Mark Smith, a Rotary Club member and the owner of [Shelter Insurance - Mark Smith Insurance Agency, LLC](#), noted that Bell-Yates was an incredibly worthy recipient.

“She was one of those who helped lead to the revitalization of Wood River,” Smith said. “She and her husband are also very charitable in the community as well. We are very proud of them. It was a club-wide vote to select Rustic Roots as the business of the year.”

Bell-Yates grew up in Wood River and spent a lot of time in the space that would eventually become Rustic Roots. Her grandfather owned the building, and when he passed, Bell-Yates and her husband bought it from his estate because they couldn’t imagine it going to a stranger.

Around this time, she started making home decor and refinishing furniture. Bell-Yates and her friends decided to combine forces and sell their crafts and products out of the building. Almost immediately, it took off. More vendors moved in, and they expanded the shop to include the Rally Room space.

Suddenly, Bell-Yates had a buzzing business on her hands — and she loved it.

“I knew once I started there was no stopping,” she said, adding, “I’ve been making memories in this building for almost my entire life.”

More memories are in the works, with goals to keep expanding. But in the meantime, Bell-Yates does everything she can to honor the roots of Rustic Roots. Wood River is her hometown, and giving back is one of the main pillars of the shop. They often donate to local nonprofits, including [Riverbend Family Ministries](#) and [Refuge 4 Kids](#), and they enjoy working with companies that also donate, recycle or otherwise support the community.

Bell-Yates herself tries to shop local as much as possible and support the people who have supported her. As the Business of the Year recognition sinks in, she's more proud and thankful to her community than ever.

“If we didn't have the support and love of our customers and the communities around us, we wouldn't survive,” Bell-Yates said. “I am extremely honored and grateful for the opportunity. It means everything to me as a small business.”

To learn more about Rustic Roots and browse their products, visit [their website](#) or [Facebook page](#).