

## NEIGHBORHOOD ROUNDUP

# Residents of artist village pleased with progress

By **MATTHEW LeBLANC**

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What began as therapy in 1999 for Larry L'Hote has become an ongoing search to create beauty from other people's garbage.

L'Hote, a former Hickman High School physics teacher, began working with wood in 1999 to relieve some of the stress of taking care of his ill wife, Peg. He found the work was enjoyable and took his mind - for a little while - off the serious situation his spouse was facing. "You need something to get your feet on the floor," L'Hote said.

Seven years later, he is on his own, and the 66-year-old is blossoming into an artisan who uses metal hangers, wire, scrap wood, fabric scraps and other things typically thrown aside to create original works of art. He has created a caricature of Arthur Miller using coat hangers and also a metal sculpture based on Henri Matisse's famous painting "Blue Nude." There is also a woman's face he sculpted using steel that used to be attached to a microwave.

L'Hote says his art is satisfying, and he was proud to show it publicly for the first time Saturday. What is most important to him, however, is the process by which it's created.

"As others have discovered, there is beauty and usefulness to be found in the least of things," reads a postcard the artist handed out at Village ArtWalk 2006. "Getting the treasure out of someone's trash takes considerable effort and foresight as does making productive citizens from the disadvantaged."

In plain terms, L'Hote said, "I'm not really interested in the finished piece as much as the process."

From 4 to 8 p.m., artists in north central Columbia showed paintings, sculptures, photos - even graffiti art - as part of an "art walk and block party" meant to shore up support for an artists' community in the area called The Village. The area has been growing in recent years, residents there say, and L'Hote said the event was a good opportunity to show his work.

Dan Cullimore, who lives on Eighth Street, said he was amazed by the transformation the neighborhood has seen since the idea of an artists' community took root in the mid-1990s. "It's been pretty impressive what they've been able to do," he said. "It benefits a community to have art available and accessible."

Apparently, some others in the area feel the same way. Earlier this month, Neighborhood Roundup reported that Koonse Glass Co. soon would begin replacing damaged and broken glass that makes up the storefront of the Heibel-March Building on Range Line Street. The building will be turned into a community center of sorts.

On Orr Street, Mark Timberlake reports that a project he's undertaken to turn the former Watkins Roofing buildings into artists' studios could be completed by next week. "I feel as though things have really started to improve around here," said Jessie Lawson, an artist who lives in The Village.

To view L'Hote's art, go to [www.lhote.com](http://www.lhote.com). For more information on the community, call the Village Art Team at 443-2416.

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