



Jane and Dave Wickham sold their Centerville home and moved to Lewisburg in May to bring their dream of owning a business designed to offer positive experiences to life. The Joy & Whimsy Depot will open at the end of April. CONTRIBUTED

Spreading some Joy & Whimsy

Dayton attorney, his wife creating art-filled space where people can escape stress.

By Beth Anspach
Contributing Writer

The holiday season can be stressful and with all the hustle and bustle, people often forget that it's

meant to be a time of goodwill.

Dave Wickham, a former Centerville resident and attorney and partner at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, said he has noticed a pattern over the years of people becoming harsher to one another and less kind.

"I was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease about ten years ago," Wickham said. "My wife, Jane, and I were going through some frustration because it took a very long while to get a diagnosis. We

knew we needed to find something encouraging to make us feel better."

The couple discovered that it was difficult to find a place designed just to make people happy and to give them a place to escape the stress of their everyday lives. They began wondering if they could open such a place themselves.

"Jane and I had this vision to create a place that would display positive, creative and colorful works of

art by local and regional artists," Wickham said. "We wanted people to be able to come in and stay as long as they needed to, then leave with a smile and a renewed spirit of kindness."

But finding that perfect place wasn't easy. The couple began looking for abandoned churches and found many that had been sitting empty so long that they

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would need extensive renovation. They had a name for their business - "The Joy & Whimsy Depot" - but no physical location.

"The dream was almost dead until one day I was talking to a friend about my life with Parkinson's," Wickham said. "She said my whole demeanor changed when I talked about the Depot and my face lit up!"

Wickham decided to expand his search and found a church and parsonage in Lewisburg that had been occupied until 2018 when it was put up for sale.

"This place was so much further along than any we had seen," Wickham said. "It was perfect to display art, but also had space for a garden and path where people could go to meditate and pray."

The parsonage needed the most work, and Wickham said he wasn't sure he could convince Jane to



Volunteers work alongside Dave Wickham, the owner of the soon-to-be-opened Joy & Whimsy Depot in Lewisburg, constructing an outdoor prayer garden next to the former church building. CONTRIBUTED

move in. But after closing on the property near the end of April and selling their Centerville home, the couple moved in and began the renovation process.

We had contractors come out and we painted and replaced doors and windows, which helped it look a little more presentable,"

Wickham said. "We ended up taking the chimney down because it was leaning!"

Another reason Wickham said his wife was supportive of purchasing the property was because the couple had always liked the Lewisburg community.

"We had been to Lewisburg several times over the

years and we just felt it was special," Wickham said. "It's not that far from Dayton and my work and we knew the community would be supportive."

In fact, Lewisburg residents, along with Mayor Marsha Jones and Village Manager Jeff Sewart, say they are excited about the Joy & Whimsy Depot and how it will fit into their vision for the arts in the community. And the Wickhams were excited to install a sign finally announcing the opening.

"Our grand opening will be the last week of April," Wickham said. "We are contacting various art organizations and schools looking for art of all different types, including painting, sculpture, film, quilts, videos and music. As long as it is positive, joyful and encouraging, we want to see it."

The Joy & Whimsy Depot will be family friendly and there will be no admission charge. Donations to support the nonprofit will be accepted at the door. The

church renovation includes the sanctuary, which will feature formal art and the former fellowship hall in the basement, which will house more whimsical art pieces. The Depot will be opened to the public May through October every year and for special events November through April. A Film and Arts Festival, designed to tell the Joy & Whimsy Depot story, will be held Feb. 2-9.

Seeing his dream come to fruition continues to inspire Wickham to do what he can to stave off the debilitating effects of Parkinson's.

"The amazing thing is that I am doing things now that two years ago I couldn't come close to doing," Wickham said. "Parkinson's treatments are developing so quickly, and I am so thankful for this opportunity to spread joy and kindness to all."

For more information, visit JoyWhimsyDepot.com.

Contact this contributing writer at banspach@gmail.com.