

# Clay Studio of Green Valley - Green Valley Recreation Recreation Center at Santa Rita Springs - Fiesta Building

## History of the Clay Studio by Diane Ernest

**1993: GVR** was completing the elimination of the paid supervisor. The community honored Gil Laurion for serving eleven years, who instructed in Potter's Wheel, Hand building and instrumental in establishing the Art Center at Desert Hills. By autumn of 1993, each hobby area was required to implement a club with a volunteer monitor system, retaining any fees collected to maintain the equipment and improvements.

- **1993: Fall: The Clay Studio of Green Valley** formed with the following officers: President: Keith Olsan, V. P.: Janet Douglas, Secretary: Betty Swenson, Treasurer: Paul Dowd, Historian: Halle Frieberger and a great Board of Directors. Diane Ernest established *Clay Shards* Newsletter with Jan Douglas, Mary Wilson, Marian Fick and Irene Shaver.
- **1994:** President Ann Gillingham, VP Sharlyn Mathews, Secretary Helen Schulz and Treasurer Jan Roberts. On February 10, Clay Studio's, Diane Ernest, gave various presentations requesting space for future expansion. Location of the Studio was at Desert Hills Social Center with open rooms in 'L' shape with 1667 square feet configuration was inadequate. Noise from one area to the next did not allow for simultaneous classes.
- Three quarters of the membership participated in needs assessment. The planning committee formed with Diane Ernest as Principal Designer and project manager, Jan Douglas as assistant, color coordinator, and fund raising, Elizabeth Cockerill and Mary Wilson, professional artists and designers, Keith Olsan, kiln & pottery area design and Jack Ernest, Electronics Engineer, lighting, computerize kilns and electrical design.
- **1995, late:** GVR purchased the Wilson Property near West Center with 10,000 square feet available for two hobby areas. David Sirota was instrumental in reviewing the plans. Both Wood Shop and the Clay Studio presented plans using some common areas. They abandoned plans when parking was inadequate by newer standards.
- **1996:** Planning Committee members traveled across country to visit other studios and others visited nearby studios & universities.
- A two story unfinished concrete block building set into the hillside lay among six other buildings designed for an RV Park. Purchased by developers in December 1994, site remodeling started. Three buildings removed, hillside cut away, top floor partially removed, then, the outside finished on three buildings. *Recreation Village at Santa Rita Springs* was included in 1996 to Green Valley Recreation System by the GVR Membership
- **1997:** The developers contribute funds to complete the structure to code. Clay Studio volunteers donated through multiple displays, window sales, dedicated funds, and support of the Arts & Craft Association through public events, interest-bearing accounts, personal donations, & matching funds. A strategic plan was in place so items purchased were delivered to the new studio. Books donated for extensive library, from the Wood workers labor, from Studio volunteer's skills to computerize kilns, make work tables, and helped move. The object of fund raising gave the Studio specialized equipment without affecting the general membership's funding.
- **1998:** Assigned the ground floor level at Santa Rita Springs, Fiesta Building in 1998, Clay Studio Planning Committee members worked with GVR Staff to finalize adjustments. Diane Ernest presented to GVR the Needs Assessment with Plans with each item specifically spelled out in text form. Don Swanson joined the Design Team for the Pottery Studio Room. The electrical source for this building in close proximity makes easy placement of eight kilns and the Pottery Studio. Each committee member along with Ann Gillingham, presented vertical plans and a model designed by

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Bill Till, to complete the overall look. This 4700 square feet of space in a ground level building, provides types of clay be delivered to a humidity controlled room located near rear delivery door.

- The Clay Studio initially donated \$30,000 through Studio President Jack Ernest to GVR President Richard Hansen and Executive Director Jeff Ziegler, to start the millwork during construction, and \$15,000 to finish it. Potter's wheels, slab roller, tables, glazes, kilns, monitor's station, sculpting carts, chairs and small equipment increased expenditures by another \$10,000.
- In October **1998**, the Fiesta Building's Open House showed the many members of GVR a fine facility with dual-insulated classrooms for sculpture, hand building, and pottery. No matter how many classes are in session, there is always a special place to work in an Open Area. Sufficient sinks are available with wrist-controlled faucets for ease of project. For layouts, Potter's Wheel & tables of variable heights are to access different people's heights and wheelchair accessibility.
- **Member safety a prime concern:** The holding room placed next to the kilns gives easy access to loading green ware. The lighting for the artist's area is variable to simulate daylight conditions. The built in vacuum system removes the clay particle before it aerosols in conjunction with a high filtration system & filter change maintenance schedule. Zoned room air provides that during usage, individual room doors close to conserve energy. Clay traps are under each sink for particle & glaze chemical entrapment. Computerized controls on the kilns relieve unnecessary returning to the studio by volunteer kiln attendants. The EnviroVent® and fans provide automatic removal of fumes and odors.
- A landscaped stuccoed concrete block wall with soil retention curb in the outside yard acts as a sound barrier to the neighborhood. Located here are air handlers, electrical transformer, Raku Kilns, shed, gas source, fire standpipe and compressor for inside glaze spray booth.
- **1999: The Clay Studio of Green Valley won the Arizona Parks & Recreation Association's Excellence in Parks, Recreation, Cultural and Community Services award. The University of Arizona Art Instructors acknowledged great achievement in design and function.**
- From the Green Valley News & Sun, Regina Ford:

**“It took a lot more than twenty-five pounds of clay to complete this project, but one should never utter the word “impossible” to the determined members of the Clay Studio of Green Valley.”**

#### **Honored by Diane Ernest, principle designer, were following participants:**

Ed Coad, Jack Ernest, Don Swanson, Bill Till in 1998, carton made of moving adventure by B Perry; Mary Wilson, Elizabeth Cockerill, Keith Olsan, Jan Douglas, Richard Hansen, David Sirota and Jeff Ziegler with ceramic *luminarias*.

#### **Recognition given to all Clay Studio Presidents:**

Keith Olsan, 1993, Ann Gillingham 1994, Elizabeth Cockerill 1995, Susan Fischer 1996-97, Jack Ernest 1998-99, Peg Robb 2000-2001 and Jan Schoenben 2002-2004.