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WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026 | JSONLINE.COM/COMMUNITIES

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Why the Oak Creek Buc-ee's opening was pushed back

Buc-ee's has started construction on its first Wisconsin location in Oak Creek with plans to open in early 2028.

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Former priest faces mayor in Assembly District 21 Democratic primary

District 21 has a Democratic primary on Aug. 11 with former Catholic priest David Liners facing Oak Creek Mayor Dan Bukiewicz.

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CUTTING EDGE ART

Christina Destrampe, owner and founder of Milwaukee Mandalas, is shown in front of her paper mandala designs for sale at Serendipity Boutique Marketplace in Greenfield on July 8, 2026.

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Greendale small business, Milwaukee Mandalas, layers paper to make art

Stephanie Perez

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel | USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

In the lower level of Serendipity Boutique Marketplace in Greendale, a classroom fills with chatter. As the start of the class quickly approaches, people begin to fill the room, grabbing their pre-selected mandala designs and heading to an open table.

A mix of nerves and excitement can be felt in the air on July 8 as longtime friends, families and couples on a date night, sit patiently inspecting the items in front of them: layers of pre-cut cardstock, tweezers, foam adhesive dots and a frame to display the final design.

As the hour reaches 6 p.m., Christina Destrampe, the artist behind Milwaukee Mandalas, begins her class.

A configuration of geometric shapes, mandalas are used in some cultures as a tool for spiritual guidance. For Destrampe, it guided her into starting her business, Milwaukee Mandalas, five years ago. Using cutting machines to cut cardstock paper, she adds adhesive foam dots to every layer, giving the design depth.

A string of "ohs" begin to flood the room as Destrampe explains the process of paper layering and

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ABOVE: Christina Destrampe, the artist behind Milwaukee Mandalas, works on a new design on July 8 at Serendipity Boutique Marketplace in Greendale. **AT TOP:** Milwaukee Mandalas uses precision paper cutting to layer and create various designs.

PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE PEREZ / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Paper

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confusion begins to melt away. Laughter and conversation follow as participants fall into a routine of sticking foam adhesive dots to each layer and stacking, bringing their designs to life.

From Milwaukee skylines to flowers, Destrampe has used her skills to create intricate sceneries far more than just traditional mandalas.

She hosts mandala workshops several times a month, creating an environment where she says, "anyone can make something beautiful." Participants can pick their own design and color combinations prior to the class, with some seasonal designs offered throughout the year.

"A lot of people come with friends and so they're talking," Destrampe said. "It's not like coloring where you have to pay attention to what color goes where. These are in order. You start from the back and work your way to the front."

Destrampe started experimenting with paper layering when her son was young

Not considering herself 'artistic' growing up, she found her niche with paper layering when preparing for her son's 2nd birthday.

"William was born prematurely, so like eight weeks early, and I was in the hospital before that, so that time of the year for a very long time wasn't very pleasant," Destrampe said. "A coping strategy for me to prepare for his birthday was to make birthday decorations."

She would go over to her mother's house and use her cutting machine to cut things, take it home and glue it there. By the time her youngest, Zachary, was born, her mother gifted Destrampe her old cutting machine and her craft journey began.

With her new machine, she ventured into different projects. She learned how to use vinyl and made T-shirts, which was short lived. She moved on to making Christmas presents and "too many" ornaments.

"Then I found a design for a paper mandala and I'm like, 'I know how to cut paper, I've done it with my mom,'" Destrampe said. "So, I did it and I loved it and I kept doing it."

After being convinced by friends to start selling her work, she began by sell-



LEFT: Cousins Jennifer Potter (left) and Laurie Morales (right) attend Milwaukee Mandalas' paper layering workshop at Serendipity Boutique Marketplace in Greendale on July 8. **RIGHT:** A paper mandala made by Christina Destrampe of Milwaukee Mandalas being sold at Serendipity Boutique Marketplace. PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE PEREZ / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL



ing on Facebook Marketplace and later created Milwaukee Mandalas. Now, she has made over 5,000 mandalas and sells her art at Serendipity Boutique Marketplace in Greendale and The She Shed in Hartford.

It's a 'place you can congregate with people,' class member says

Jennifer Potter, who works as a student success advisor at the Milwaukee Career College in Wauwatosa, has been to four of Destrampe's classes and keeps returning. This time she's working on a design to add to her family room and brought her cousin, Laurie Morales, to join the workshop.

"When they're all done, it's just amazing what they look like," Potter said. "I think that's the biggest thing. You do this for so long, and then when you're done, you're like 'wow.'"

Potter has several of Destrampe's pieces displayed around her house and said she gets compliments from guests when they see the art. She said she is already working with Destrampe for an upcoming Christmas present.

"Coming here, you have a place you can congregate with people," Potter said. "[Laurie] even knew somebody from high school. You just see people you know because they keep coming back too."

Finding balance between managing her business and home life

For Destrampe, balancing work and home life has been difficult. While managing Milwaukee Mandalas, she also

works as a sign language interpreter at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"This summer has been really hard because normally I would take the boys to school and I would come here and work," Destrampe said. "I feel bad, now I'm actually leaving them, it's harder."

Her sons, William and Zachary, occasionally come to help Destrampe set up before workshop classes. They put out tools on the tables needed for the workshop or help organize kits. Although summers can be hard, she's grateful for the flexibility her business grants her.

"It still doesn't feel like work," Destrampe said. "The thing that makes it feel like work is when I have to leave the kids. Even the things I don't like to do don't feel like work."

Having a home base for her work after working from home

Serendipity Boutique Marketplace has been a "home base" for Destrampe throughout her paper layering career, selling her art at the store since their opening in 2021. The shop includes the work of dozens of other local artists and vendors selling their work on the store's two floors. Their goal is to provide a "physical storefront" for artists and vendors who might not otherwise have one, according to their website.

When the store first opened, the owner called Destrampe to invite her to sell her work and she hasn't left since. Before selling at Serendipity, Destrampe sold at another storefront and worked out of her home.

"I was cutting paper in the living room," Destrampe said. "We'd be watch-

ing a movie and you'd hear 'RRRR.' This has been a good change."

On the first floor of Serendipity, you can find a 12-foot-long wall space with shelves filled with Destrampe's work on sale. The lower level of the store is where Destrampe's office is located and where she stores paper and cutting machines. It's also where she conducts her workshops in the store's classroom space.

"My spot upstairs too, I started with 4 feet, and then I moved to 8 feet and now I'm a little past 12," Destrampe said. "It's really expanded; I've started offering kits, I've done so much more than when I started it."

Over the past year, Destrampe has purchased bigger machines that have allowed her to increase production and grow her workshop offerings. She has been able to cut more intricate designs, including new Milwaukee-themed designs that feature the Milwaukee skyline, Mitchell Park Domes and American Family Field.

"The amount that I'm able to cut with these machines has just seriously been a game changer and they cut detailed stuff really well," Destrampe said.

Although picking a favorite design may seem like picking her favorite child, Destrampe knows she can return to what she knows best.

"I also can always go back to a traditional mandala, like when I first started, that's all I made," Destrampe said. "The world of making these designs has exploded since."

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