



**ON THE COVER** Courtney Grace Ofeimun with her homemade candles in the greenhouse at Fantastic Gardens of Long Island in Patchogue.

LINDA ROSIER

# CREATIVE CRAFTERS

Get to know these artists, and where to buy their creations

**BY JOANN VAGLICA**  
Special to Newsday

Long Island crafters are emerging at a rapid pace these days. Many credit the pandemic for bringing forth extra downtime for them to rediscover their crafting hobbies. Others, who were already experimenting with handmade creations, used the time to rebrand or perfect their craft. One thing these makers all have in common: They're DIY enthusiasts who've turned their creative sides into a profit.

Get to know four local artists who are making and selling their crafts across Long Island at upcoming street and craft fairs.

## 1. HAYLEY DI RICO: SEA SCHLEPS

Hayley Di Rico's days of collecting sea glass date back to her childhood when "Uncle Eddie" would bring her and her cousins to the beach. It's been a lifelong hobby that came to a halt when "life" took over: "I was busy with school, busy getting married, busy with a career, busy with my children," the 35-year-old mother of 6-year-old twins

says. "But, the pandemic gave me a reset; it gave me an opportunity to go back and do the things that I used to love that I didn't have the time before to do."

Di Rico, a graphic designer, spends a few hours a week at various Long Island beaches handpicking materials for her projects, from sea glass and pottery and oyster shells to rocks, pebbles and driftwood.

Her main creations are framed sea glass (starting at \$35) and decorated oyster shells (starting at \$12), the latter of which are decoupaged, set with

amethyst or aventurine quartz or filled with resin. All are hand-painted. Di Rico has also added ornaments, coastal garlands and wine bottle charms, all featuring shells, to her offerings.

**WHERE TO BUY** Find Di Rico's products at The Garden Farmers Market (67 Avery Ave., Patchogue) on Saturday or at the Winter Wonderland Fair (1700 Wantagh Ave., Wantagh) on Nov. 27. Or, shop at seaschleps.com; Etsy: etsy.com/shop/SeaSchleps; Hitch in Babylon; and Hive Market and Maker's Space in Oyster Bay.

## 2. KATHLEEN AND JOE DESIDERIO: COASTAL CREATIONS

It was during a hospital visit at South Side in Bay Shore in January 2020 that



1

Hayley Di Rico, of Sea Schleps, with her sea-inspired creations.

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2

Kathleen and Joe Desiderio, owners of Coastal Creations, with their resin crafts.

KATHLEEN DESIDERIO

Kathleen Desiderio first checked out an art display that piqued her interest. “I had never seen resin before,” she says of some of the projects that were displayed in the lobby. “I started researching, thinking I would use it for my photography, but then I saw all that you can do” with it. By the end of the year, Coastal Creations was born.

“A lot of stuff ended up in the garbage,” she says of how it started

after depending on YouTube. “It has a lot to do with temperature and timing.” As for how it’s going now, Desiderio’s items can be found anywhere but the trash can: hanging on the wall in the form of art and mounted bottle openers; on the table as charcuterie boards, trays, coasters and canisters, and elsewhere as key chains, ornaments, handheld bottle openers and ring dishes. Grab a key-chain for \$15 or wall art for \$1,000.



4

Nicole Fodera, owner of Nicole Diandra: I Make Stuff, creates products with buttons.

MATTHEW FODERA

Since launching, Desiderio, 58, the senior vice president of marketing at Citigroup, has turned this into a husband-and-wife operation, recruiting husband Joe, 58, to help. His job? “I’m the everything-else-ist,” he says with a laugh. That encompasses supply purchasing and sales and marketing, plus prep work and finishing touches.

**WHERE TO BUY** Find the Desiderios products at the East Islip High School craft fair (1 Redmen St., Islip Terrace) on Saturday. Shop at Bunger in Sayville, Babylon Cheese Cellar and One Love Beach in Greenport.

**3. COURTNEY GRACE OFEIMUN: CG CANDLE COLLECTION**

Courtney Grace Ofeimun started her self-care business in 2020. One year later, she’s rebranded, renamed and expanded. “People really loved the candles” most out of the body scrubs, shea butter creams, lip balms and soaps she was selling last year, so she “started to hone in” on what was driving sales, she says of taking a shot at a rebrand this September.

The 25-year-old sells a selection of 18 essential oil-infused soy candles, 10 of which are mainstays, in scents such as peach nectar, leafy lavender and coco mango milk. Ofeimun — along with a staff of four — creates about 200 4-ounce candles every two hours. Prices range from \$12 for 4 ounces (14-hour burn time) to \$25 for 10 ounces (70-hour burn time).

The self-taught candlemaker wants to now focus more on the home décor pieces that she offers, including Buddhas and other statues that represent “earth, grounding and spirituality,” she says, along with statement crystals and crystal candle holders.

Ofeimun has also created a traveling

“secret garden” where customers “with the intention to relax and let go for the day” come together to make their own candles, get massages and nosh on vegan and vegetarian eats.

**WHERE TO BUY** Find Ofeimun’s products at the Autumn’s Harvest Art and Food Truck Festival at the Great South Bay Brewery (25 Drexel Drive, Bay Shore) on Nov. 20. Or, shop at [cgcandlecollection.com](http://cgcandlecollection.com).

**4. NICOLE FODERA: NICOLE DIANDRA: I MAKE STUFF**

When was the last time you looked at a button and saw it as something more? For Nicole Fodera, that was back in 2016 when she expanded her crafting business, Nicole Diandra: I Make Stuff. With buttons, she creates tic-tac-toe boards, travel “I Spy” sets, badge reels, magnets, coasters and handheld mirrors.

Expect to find products with of-the-moment themes and decals, like “Schitt’s Creek,” baseball teams, mermaids, doughnuts, Mario Brothers and Disney characters. Prices range from \$3 for a magnet to \$20 for a tic-tac-toe set.

As for experimenting with buttons, Fodera, 42, says, “I wanted to make little button magnets. I thought they’d be a cute gift idea and there were endless possibilities . . . and it escalated from there.”

The shop also sells Scrabble tile products ranging from ornaments to wine charms, key hooks and key chains.

**WHERE TO BUY** Find Fodera’s products at the Massapequa Chamber of Commerce’s holiday fair (American Legion Post 1066, 66 Veterans Blvd.) on Sunday. Or, shop at [Etsy.com/nicolediandra](http://Etsy.com/nicolediandra) and [Hitch in Babylon](http://HitchinBabylon.com).