



Dana Long

Submitted photos

Finding the artist in everyone

By Nanette Levin

“A lot of people think they can’t create, draw or paint,” says Dana Long, owner of Let’s Party Creatively. She set up her company and the associated events to change that. Each activity provides simple steps that are easy to follow so that each participant gains comfort and confidence to create their own work of art.

Let’s Party Creatively offers interactive events for the public, businesses, charities and private parties. Long has put a strong focus on team building in recent years. “Companies, especially coming out of the COVID world, are finding that their teams need to have a creative outlet for productivity,” she says. “There are studies that support teams engaging in creativity leads to better production and less mistakes.” Long also cites employee rewards and an excuse to get everyone together after the challenges of the pandemic as reasons company owners hire her.

Business Beginnings

Long started her business in 2017 with a focus on succulent plant parties, then

expanded in 2019 to start offering paint parties and a variety of do-it-yourself craft events. She came from a varied background in banking, government and the parking industry. She was sometimes frustrated by the structure, rules, and limited tolerance for creative thought. “So, when the opportunity presented itself to take the knowledge base and lifelong passion for plants and creative pursuits, I took that opportunity and started my own business,” Long explains.

“I used to attend some paint parties and people sitting around me would say ‘I hate my painting, it’s awful’ and I felt so bad about people feeling bad about what they created,” she says. “I wanted to give everyone the tools, the knowledge and the ability to be creative.”



Her goal was to not only offer the type of parties that were commonplace, but also to focus on unique events not available in the marketplace. These have included working with India inks, jewelry making and succulent and other plant related creations. "I've always been crafty and artsy, and I wanted to bring those skills to other people, I wanted people to feel good about being creative."

Gauntlet Finalist

Let's Party Creatively was a silver award winner in the 2021 Gauntlet competition (staged by the Vinton-based Advancement Foundation), receiving a \$3,050 value prize. Long focused her application on the team-building initiatives she was adding to the business offerings at the time. The live interview was a bit of a challenge.

Led Head August 5	Mended Fences August 19	The Kings September 2	Fuzzy Logic September 16	The Worx October 7

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 SUPPORTING AREA NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS FOR 34 YEARS
 5-9PM SELECT FRIDAYS THROUGH OCTOBER
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She was in Cancun at the time. Like many problem-solving entrepreneurs, though, Long found a way to make it work.

"The Gauntlet is very beneficial for anyone beginning a new business or even thinking of a business venture," she states. "As an established business, it helped to refine my business goals and processes by working through the business plan process including the SWOT and competitive analysis. An added benefit was networking and making connections with other like-minded entrepreneurs."

Team Building Events

These engagements are turnkey, customized and generally incorporate a theme. Long explains these can be everything from icebreaker type activities to programs designed to build deeper understanding and relationships with longstanding fellow employees. Services include developing the project ideas and providing choices when appropriate to the client, facilitating the exercises and conversations, set up, clean up and furnishing all needed supplies.

Long cites a staffing agency she worked with as a good example. They chose a painting the group liked. Participants took photos together and she created talking points to help initiate conversation. Some of these included questions such as "tell us something no one knows about you." Answers ranged from a fish bite to a fear of water. People bonded by talking to and complimenting each other.

Charitable Cause Programs

"I've done a lot of fundraising events," says Long. These have included work to benefit the Heart Association, Angels of Assisi, Daughters of the American Revolution and other organizations. "These are a unique and innovative way for people to come together and raise money for a worthy cause."

Long illustrates with an event at a barn that saves farm animals, where participants interacted and connected with the animals. "People feel like they're not just giving their dollars to an unknown entity. When they can see how their money is going to help a worthy cause they're more likely to continue to support that charity."

For the Public

While Long is putting greater focus on designing customized team-building programs and fundraising events for clients, she continues to offer public parties. These are held at various restaurants, wineries and breweries throughout Southwest Virginia. Her territory range reaches north to Lexington, east to Lynchburg, southwest to the New River Valley and places in between.

"My business is offering creative events where no talent or skill is required," says Long. Projects ideas and announcements of upcoming Let's Party Creatively events can be found on Facebook @CreateRoanoke. 