

# Hockinson florist creates grand displays for competitions and local events



PHOTO BY CHEASANEE HETHERINGTON

Kelley Birkinbine, owner of Bentley Fleurs, poses with the flower-lined photo frame she created for the Hockinson High School prom, which took place April 20.



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Kelley Birkinbine explains how she created the large floral archway for the Hockinson prom from a mixture of fresh and faux flowers.

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Having traveled across the country for flower competitions, Hockinson florist Kelley Birkinbine loves returning home to share her love of flowers with Clark County locals.

Whether large or small, Birkinbine enjoys bringing fresh flowers to homes and events.

"There's something to be said about fresh flowers and their colors and the textures. Having a vase of fresh flowers just lifts your spirits," Birkinbine said.

Birkinbine worked with florals throughout her life before establishing her business, Bentley Fleurs. She spent many years incorporating florals in her graphic design and marketing work, as well as her own home. While assisting her uncle with interior design, she realized that her floral art could become a bigger part of her professional life.

"Seven years ago, I started assisting my uncle who is a designer, and he's done some pretty lavish events. That got me thinking bigger and unleashed my imagination," Birkinbine said.

Birkinbine's first large arrangement still hangs in her shop. The large tree, filled with faux florals and greenery, serves as a reminder of where she started.

"I bought branches and I started wiring them to the rafters. Then I got the flowers and greens, and I just kept adding until it felt done to me. It inspires me every time I come down here," Birkinbine said. "I needed to prove to myself I could figure it out and I could do it."

Now that her children are older and more independent, she has more time to devote to pursuing her passion professionally, Birkinbine said.

"The evenings are busy, but during the daytime it's a lot easier to [pursue art]," Birkinbine said.

Over the past two years, Birkinbine has used her extra time to pursue a formal floral education. She has taken classes with the American Institute of Floral Designers and has traveled to Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, to get hands-on experience at Fleurs de Villes competitions.

Getting a formal education and competition experience has been important to Birkinbine. Previously a

self-taught florist, she relearned the basics and has expanded her craft beyond traditional floristry.

"Somebody advised me that you can't break the rules until you know the rules," Birkinbine said.

Birkinbine has received awards for arrangements that push the possibilities of flowers. Her large installations include floral gowns, ceiling adornments and other sculptures. Though expensive to create, the large pieces are Birkinbine's favorites.

Despite traveling the country and into Canada for floral competitions, Birkinbine frequently volunteers to create floral displays in Clark County. She recently created a flower arch and photo frame for the Hockinson High School prom on April 20. The archway and photo frame were crafted using a mixture of fresh and faux flowers to create an "enchanted forest"-themed prop for photography, Birkinbine said.

In the future, Birkinbine hopes to practice experiential marketing for clients, where large floral displays are created to promote a business while acting as an art piece and photography prop. Commercial floral displays provide marketing value for the business while giving people a positive, fun experience



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Florals and greenery are wired and pinned around a mannequin by Kelley Birkinbine to create a floral gown.

to enjoy flowers, Birkinbine said.

"Experiential marketing involves people, and it helps the store because the customers advertise for the store. They are taking their pictures with the floral display, tagging the store and

sharing it with friends because it's a fun experience," Birkinbine said.

To learn more about Birkinbine and her business, Bentley Fleurs, visit [bentleyfleurs.com](http://bentleyfleurs.com), or email [kelley@bentleyfleurs.com](mailto:kelley@bentleyfleurs.com).