

Heather Dean-Leadley

Heather Dean-Leadley owns Dark Artsy 1300 in Accrington, where she crafts figurines and promotes and sells work made by her children and local small businesses.

I met Heather last year and was automatically drawn to her colourful hair, but also her radiant personality. Heather was brought up in Accrington, but moved to Clayton seven years ago, finding it to be a friendly and comfortable place to bring up her children. She loves the local walks, the friendly people and the variety of interesting pubs in the area.

Heather is very family orientated and likes to involve her children; Disney, Sooki and Jagger to take part in the business. 'Dark Artsy 1300' originally started as 'Busy Bugs Crafts' due to her son's additional needs. She wanted to create a space that helped integrate SEN individuals within the community, rather than separating them. She was told that her son would be non-verbal, but as Heather engaged him in creative activities that he enjoyed, along came his speech.

As Heather began making plaster shapes, she noticed how much her son enjoyed feeling them and soon her girls started requesting new shapes and figurines. This inspired Heather to build her business, and to introduce figurine painting classes and trade at craft fairs with her children.

Heather's first love is Horror, even though it terrifies her. She even admitted to me that she had an imaginary friend when she was younger. It was Freddy Krueger and he lived in her wardrobe. Child's Play was one of her scariest films and she used to kick her Barbie's out of her room, just in case.

This love of horror has found its way into the shop, allowing a safe spot for college and alternative individuals, like her daughter, to find their own version of Affleck Palace, a little closer to home.

Dark Artsy 1300 has become a place where Heather can help give artists and small businesses a platform to show and sell their work. Her children get involved too. Jagger buys DVDs and watches them, checking out their quality and writes a synopsis for the film before selling them in the shop. Her daughter Disney crotchets Potatoes and zombie heads, and Sooki makes decorative bottles. This sense of creativity is contagious when you meet Heather, and it spills out into her customers too.

As a former forest school leader at Great and Small Forest School, Heather has got that leader instinct. She has created crafting classes for children and adults, game nights and tarot reading nights within her shop. Her ideas are endless, with mobile parties and murder vans, being a few.

I asked Heather 'what advice would you give someone.' And she answered. 'Just try! Have a go and do the best you can.' From meeting her, I can tell that she lives by her own advice.