

NEIGHBORS



Sheila Sons creates a world for the Spindlies in her backyard cottage.

Sheila Sons

Sheila Sons is doing big things with the help of some very little people. The owner of She Designs Inc., a graphic design company, has created a line of greeting cards and stationary called Spindlyville. Inhabited by the Spindlies, Spindlyville is a world of tiny people with big hearts. "I started creating these little miniature, spindly people with the job of spreading joy," she said.

But long before Sons' adventures in Spindlyville, she was in North Dakota. She grew up a half hour south of Fargo, in a small town with a population of only 400. Sons created her own excitement by spending time drawing and writing in her playhouse.

"It was just a little hideaway," said Sons. "A place to open up to this world of creativity, and be inspired by my thoughts and the 12-ring circus going on inside my head."

After nurturing her artistic talents throughout her childhood, Sons attended at Moorhead State University in Minnesota before following her dreams to Sarasota.

"I had two goals," she said. "To graduate from an art school, and to be somewhere warm. After growing up in North Dakota, I needed to be somewhere warm." Sarasota's Ringling School of Art and Design proved to be the per-

fect match. Upon graduation in 1994, Sons started She Designs.

"I am very dedicated to each of my clients. I'm focused on their goals, as well as budgets and deadlines," she said. "I'm very proud of that work. Some of my clients have been there from the beginning. Their success is my goal."

Having achieved success for her clients, she embarked upon her own project: drawing Spindlyville.

"I thought if I focused that same energy on my own creation it would be fun, as well as super rewarding," she said. "I really enjoy drawing, so getting away from the computer was also a way of relaxing."

With the help of her husband, comedian and Children First advocate Ken Sons, Sons created her own place to relax — with a little inspiration from her childhood playhouse.

"I thought, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have a sunny room that doesn't have phones, computer screens or the buzzing of the latest technology?' Just a nice, quiet place." That nice quiet place took the form of a 200-square-foot cottage in her backyard.

Sons found that the Spindlyville line came easily. She has since created more than 65 different greeting cards, as well as enclosure cards, notepads and

UP CLOSE

DESIGN INSPIRATION:

Sons is inspired by greeting card artists Patience Brewster and Mary Engelbreit, but she also finds inspiration in nature. "My favorite place to recharge the creative spark is on a long walk on our beautiful beach." She also turns to her husband for encouragement. "One of the things I am most proud of is finding and marrying my soul mate. He's such a pillar of strength."

CAREER GOALS:

Sons set a lofty career goal for herself: win 30 Addy (advertising) awards for her work at She Designs by the time she was 30. And she achieved it.

STRESS TEST:

"I've been playing piano since I was 7. That is my stress relief," said Sons, who also finds relaxation in laughter.

other accessories. Each is available locally at Persnickety Cat, Write-On Sarasota, Wonderland and Hearts Desire. The line can also be found nationally, "so that the Spindlies can start to do their work on a global level," said Sons.

— Alison Abbey