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## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH

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# ELIZABETH JOHANNA

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**"I don't have just one favorite project ... there are too many great projects to select just one!"**

*- ELIZABETH JOHANNA*

**Q:** Elizabeth, you have been in and out of the Shake Rag Alley office with a lot of different people lately! What are you up to?

**A:** I have had volunteers helping me assemble Youth Program arts and crafts kits, which just went on sale May 1! Many thanks to all of the helpers so far, including Theresa Breunig, Cathy Doyle, Cindy Fleming, Stephanie Kessenich, Harriet Ridnour, and Jane Stenson. Volunteers are always welcome! Just look for the call in our Shake Rag Alley e-newsletters.

**Q:** I see you are planning to have some in-person workshops, as well as a whole bunch of unique kits. How will you offer the in-person sessions safely?

**A:** When the weather cooperates we will be outside. If not, classes will be held in larger spaces with smaller class sizes. Everyone will continue to wear masks and we will provide hand sanitizer. We'll be following Iowa County Health Department guidelines.

**Q:** What's the process for folks who want to purchase kits for their children — or grandchildren — or nieces and nephews — or the neighbor kids — or their scout troop? Can the kits be picked up or shipped?

**A:** It's easy — you can order online or call our office at (608) 987-3292. Kits may be picked up or shipped.

**Q:** The variety of projects is amazing! How do you get your ideas? And, how do you find such an assortment of instructors?

**A:** The ideas come from the instructors. Instructors have included high school students and others right on up through folks who are retired. Some are or have been teachers -- and others just have an art form that they enjoy doing and teaching about. They always bring lots of ideas. Sometimes I see the project elsewhere and ask the instructor to bring it to Shake Rag Alley. We have projects named after their original creator, like Mercy Underwater Color or Humke Soda Can Cat. I created the Chocobite project because of my husband's love of chocolate, but it was Board member Betty Hogan who suggested using the mini-cupcake liners for the Chocobites. It makes the assembly of Chocobites easier, plus the little chocolate monsters are even cuter. Betty also suggested creating the Soda Pop Pups after seeing how the Humke Soda Can Cats were made.

**Q:** Do you have a favorite project that's new for 2021?

**A:** I don't have just one favorite project ... there are too many great projects to select just one! I get intrigued by projects I never made myself — so I am delighted to have a series of kits with corresponding videos from Kate Olsen Birner. Also new and exciting this year are Yarn Dolls kits from Mike Christensen and Finger Puppets kits from Jean Brings, not to mention the Summer in a Jar card kit by Linda Meek. We also have a sequence of classes and kits from Wendy Dueling, and in-person there is a Fairy Jars class from Kanndie Basting, plus Saori Weaving and Bengala Mud Dye with Chiaki O'Brien.

**Q:** What's your background? Do you have a specialty as an artist yourself?

**A:** I received an art degree from UW-Madison. I took workshops in Caldwell, Idaho, at a private college, for glass and papermaking, while also taking clay workshops in Sun Valley. I later went to UW-Platteville for an art education certification. When I began doing graphic design work I found that papermaking was an ideal art process to fit into my life. Although I got into papermaking because I liked how I could use it for creating large lightweight sculptures, I then discovered how much fun it was to explore the use of colored pulp.

**Q:** The Shake Rag Alley Youth Program gets some great support from the community. Are there organizations and/or individuals you'd like to acknowledge?

**A:** There are many organizations that provide grants to the Youth Program, including the Mineral Point Community Chest, Farmer's Savings Bank, the Kohler Foundation, and Point Foods through their roundup program. In the past we've also received support from the United Fund of Iowa County and Wisconsin Arts Board. I'm so pleased to have had Taylor Stumpf's help for two summers, and I especially want to give a shout out to Susan Socher, Betty Hogan, Cathy Kitto, Harriet Ridnour, and so many more volunteer assistants. Otherwise, the Youth Program literally couldn't be!