

# Made in St. Louis: Love of learning led to jewelry collection

Pat Eby Special to the Post-Dispatch 2 hrs ago 0



The ingenious design of the Sunny necklace combines a glass bead crochet rope with a pendant that can be worn on the rope or taken off the rope and worn as a brooch. Bowman shaped the plastic petals using a recycled pill bottle and a shampoo bottle and uses glass beads for the center of the flower.  
Courtesy of Kathryn Bowman

**T**he beauty of the earth writ large in silver, gemstones, glass beads and shimmering recycled bits shines through in the jewelry Kathryn Bowman creates in her St. Charles home studio. Her life journey from an inquisitive, active child living on a farm in the vast landscape of rural Colorado took a decidedly different turn when 20-year-old Kathryn moved to New York City to become a flight attendant. The change in scenery didn't faze this energetic woman whose quest for adventure and love of learning fueled her life-long learning and creativity.

## **Farm life**

Bowman's experiences on the farm gave shape to her aesthetic, her love of the earth, and the work ethic that shaped her careers and fuels her soul today.



## *abundance ring*

Bowman crafted the wire wrapped shank of her Abundance ring, which can be adjusted for size.

Courtesy of Kathryn Bowman

“I was, I am and always have been a very active person. I think I probably blew my mother’s mind when I popped out,” Bowman says. Her mother proved an able match for Bowman’s energy. She taught Kathryn to embroider long before she went to school. “I think it was a way to keep me busy. That’s why I was drawn to bead work because I still had a needle in my hand.”

Although their nearest neighbors were miles away, their community was close knit. “Two women in our neighborhood really influenced me,” she says. “They were creative in a nonstop way — always quilting, sewing, embroidering or turning an ice cream bucket into a wastebasket. I feel they gave me permission to create as part of life. I continue in that vein today.”

### **Flower power**

Inspirations that stay with her today began closer to home. “My mom and dad were farmers. After they’d spent all day in the fields they’d come home in the evening and plant flowers in our yard. My mom collected gladiolas in a rainbow of colors. My dad favored dahlias, ones that bloomed big as an 8-inch plate down to ones with the tiniest blooms,” she says.

“We had a very colorful yard, which was part of everyday life. I garden still. If springtime comes, and I’m not out in the yard things are just not right. I’ve got to be out there, digging in the dirt.” When she’s not creating jewelry, updating her informative website and Instagram page, or stitching with friends at a twice-monthly gathering of needleworkers at Craft Alliance, that is.



Jewelry by Kathryn Bowman  
Courtesy of Kathryn Bowman

## **No fear of flying**

Bowman had the chutzpah to leave her close-knit family and community when she was 20 to move to New York. The decision shaped her life in different ways.

She continued her creative pursuits while she flew and considered earning a degree in the arts. “I was accepted to Parsons School of Design in New York. I was all ready to go when TWA went international and I met my husband,” she says. “Well, ours was a whirlwind romance with all kinds of crazy travel. Bill was already living in St. Louis, so I moved here to be with him.”

She gave up her spot at Parsons and attended St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley where she earned a two-year certificate in graphic design. Soon after graduation she landed a job for TWA as a layout editor for its newsletter for flight attendants. When Carl Icahn took over TWA he abolished her department, so she returned to flying.

## **Up in the air and down to earth**

Life’s many twists and turns didn’t diminish Bowman’s creative energy. They fueled her growth as an artist and led her to teach others.

She taught beading, metalsmithing and wire wrapping classes at Lady Bug Beads in Webster Groves for 13 years. She is a juried member of the American Crafts Council, the Best of Missouri Hands and Artful Home, a premier online home style store. She became a member and president of Midwest Metalsmiths. In short, she thrived.



Today, she sells her creations only online, updating clients and potential buyers through her site and on Instagram where she also lists special online pop-up sales like her upcoming studio sale at Artful Home of unique samples she's made during her teaching tenure at Lady Bug Beads. The sale starts Jan. 17 and runs through Feb. 7.

"I'm not a production artist," she says. "I don't just, make and make and make one thing. I make original pieces and sometimes limited editions, four or five pieces of a particular design.

## **Kathryn Bowman**

**Age** • 74

**Home** • St. Charles

**Family** • Kathryn and her husband, Bill Bowman, both garden extensively and work creatively at their home.

**What she makes** • Bowman makes handmade one-of-a-kind and limited-edition jewelry marrying metal and beads, repurposed plastics and found objects.

**Where to buy** • Bowman sells her jewelry exclusively online. Her pieces are available through her website, at [kathrynbowmanstudio.com](http://kathrynbowmanstudio.com), and also through the Artful Home website and catalogs as well as through their thrice-yearly pop-up studio sales. She participates in online pop-ups at the American Craft Council and Best of Missouri Hands.

**How much** • Her pieces range from \$100 to \$800 for the limited-edition and one-of-a-kind jewelry she makes.

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