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Business

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DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER 50¢

"This is a fun business. I want people to enjoy my work."

— Don Snodgrass, owner, Places in the yard

Go on, have a cow — or pig

Castaic artist puts fancy in fiberglass

By Patricia Farrell Aiden
Staff Writer

CASTAIC — Don Snodgrass expects passers-by to do a double take. After all, there's a giraffe on his front lawn.

His dinosaur might garner more stares, but it's in the back yard. And his roosters? At 2 feet tall, they're show stoppers.

Welcome to Places in the Yard, a side business that Snodgrass began four years ago after spotting a fiberglass cow at a Ventura Boulevard garden store.

"I thought, you know there could be a market in that," Snodgrass said.

Today, he has molds for fiberglass cows, giraffes, pigs and elephants. He makes light-houses and fountains, painting the finished forms in the garage of his Castaic home.

Snodgrass drew on his experience from building props — movie-scene properties — for film productions. His recent credits include the space pods in "Planet of the Apes" and work on "Oceans 11" as well as a minor job in Stephen Spielberg's "Minority Report" starring Tom Cruise.

He sells some of his fiberglass creations at a Sherman Oaks garden shop, but most of his business comes from his Web site, fiberglasscows.com. A 33-inch-high, 5-foot-long elephant goes for \$1,195; the 4-foot-high, 9-foot-long dinosaur for \$1,250. Whimsical windmills, fountains and mailboxes are under \$500.

"This is a fun business," he said. "I want people to enjoy my work."

On Monday, Snodgrass was in his garage preparing to paint one of his small cows, a figure that stands about 26 inches tall. He sold 20 of the cows to a charity in Modesto that gave them to business sponsors to decorate and place about town before they were auctioned, a knock-off of Chicago's famed Cows on Parade promotion.

He's come a long way since that day in 1998, when he created a model cow much like the one he'd seen that day in the San Fernando Valley. He took his first project to another garden shop and left it there on consignment.

Since then, customers range from people looking for something fun for their yards to a day camp that had Snodgrass outfit a water park with an elephant that squirts water from its trunk and a dolphin with a water-shooting blowhole.



Shaun Dyer/Special to the Daily News

Castaic resident Don Snodgrass has a business selling animal forms sculpted from fiberglass, such as this life-size giraffe displayed in his front yard.



At left, the former movie-prop maker uses his garage Monday to spray-paint the base coat on a small cow he can sell as a lawn decoration.

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle questions: 253-1234, ext. 247

It's Gonna Be a Wild Safari Night at B&G Club Auction!



DICK MERRY/For The Signal

Del Holland, chairman of the 31st Annual SCV Boys & Girls Club Auction, stands with Bonnie Rabjohn near fiberglass giraffe creation of Don Snodgrass at kick-off party. Holland holds giraffe cookie created by "Someone's in the Kitchen."

The room was dominated by a large fiberglass giraffe sculpture loaned to the club by artist Don Snodgrass, whose business, Places in the Yard (www.fiberglasscows.com), specializes in fiberglass animal decorations.

"My most popular pieces are cows, full size and small cows," Snodgrass said.

The giraffe on display was created by assembling pieces from an eight piece mold borrowed from a movie prop house and then painted.

"I got the color scheme for the giraffe off the Internet," Snodgrass said.

Snodgrass, a fiberglass artist and Castaic resident, often displays his work in his yard. In addition to donating the use of his giraffe, Snodgrass is donating one of his artworks, a fiberglass rooster, to the live auction.

Guests dressed in animal prints and safari colors of beige, tan and brown added to the exotic feel of the evening as well as the African music and African-themed decorations loaned to the club by Cost Plus World Market.

"Once again it is wonderful turnout for this kick-off. I think people are excited about the theme. If the volunteers are excited then the auction will be successful," said Jim Ventress, executive director for the Boys & Girls Club.

Del Holland, Six Flags Magic