

A photograph of two elderly men, John Anderson and Everett Vitali, standing in a woodshop. John, on the left, is wearing glasses and a dark t-shirt with tan overalls. Everett, on the right, is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. They are both smiling. The background shows a well-equipped woodshop with various tools, workbenches, and a sign on the wall that reads "EXIT".

John Anderson and Everett Vitali became good friends through a shared passion at the Clubhouse 4 woodshop.

Where Passions **TAKE SHAPE**

Discover the creative sanctuary that is Clubhouse 4.

By Ellyce Rothrock and Jennings Lai

Tucked into the heart of Laguna Woods Village is a creative sanctuary where paint flows, kilns glow, needles hum and ideas come to life—Clubhouse 4. Known as the Village's arts and crafts haven, this one-of-a-kind facility offers a world of opportunity for artists, makers and curious beginners alike. Whether you're dabbling for the first time or picking up where you left off decades ago, Clubhouse 4 provides the space, tools and community to help you grow your passion at any level.

Open daily, with extended evening hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Clubhouse 4 is more than a clubhouse; it's a hub of imagination and hands-on creation. Studios are available for residents to enjoy seven days a week (except major holidays), and friendly, knowledgeable volunteer supervisors help maintain safe, welcoming environments for exploration and learning.

A STUDIO FOR EVERY PASSION

Clubhouse 4 is home to fully equipped studios and workshops that

Clubhouse 4

23501 Via Mariposa West
Laguna Woods, CA 92637
949-597-4344

Hours

Daily: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Tuesdays and Thursdays:
9 a.m. - 8 p.m.
(Closed on major holidays)

Pool 4 Hours

Mon. - Thu., Sat. - Sun.:
7 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Fridays: 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.

cater to a wide range of interests and skill levels. Whether your creative spark is just a flicker or a full-on flame, you'll find the right outlet here:

- **Art studio:** Pick up a brush or pastel and let your inner artist emerge.
- **Ceramics and slipcasting:** Sculpt, glaze and fire original ceramic pieces in professional kilns.
- **Glass studio:** Cut, shape and fuse glass into dazzling works of art.
- **Jewelry and lapidary:** Create stunning wearable art using precious metals and polished stones.
- **Photo lab:** Explore digital and film photography with access to tools and equipment.
- **Quilting and sewing rooms:** Stitch beautiful pieces in a space outfitted with everything you need.
- **Woodshop:** Cut, carve and build with precision in our hands-on workshops.

A PARTNER IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Laguna Woods Village is proud to be affiliated with the nationally recognized Saddleback College Emeritus Institute, a program designed specifically for older adults seeking intellectually rewarding experiences. Clubhouse 4 serves as an active classroom space for Emeritus Institute courses in arts, ceramics, photography, textiles and lapidary work, offering residents the chance to sharpen skills or learn entirely new ones in a structured, supportive setting.

RESTORING PHOTOS AND SMILES

John Moule and his wife Susan have called Laguna Woods Village home since 2017. One of the biggest draws was the Village's wide range of amenities. From hiking and golfing to archery, everything they need is close by. But for Moule, one amenity stood out: the photo lab.

Since his teenage years, Moule has experimented with cameras and techniques. The fully equipped photo lab gave him the chance to continue and deepen that passion. He values the range of tools available, which allow him to learn new skills and assist fellow residents. "The photo lab was a big draw for me because it had everything in there that I've never had a chance to experiment with," he said.

Part of the Village's Camera Club, the lab offers professional-grade resources like printers, scanners, editing software, matting tools, a darkroom and more. It's a hands-on space where residents of all experience levels can create and preserve visual memories.

Moule is the go-to person for photo restoration. He can colorize, edit and restore old photos and even add missing family members. One touching moment came when a resident brought him a treasured photo of her and her mother in Mexico. She wanted to give copies

to her grandkids but wasn't smiling in the picture. Moule took the image home, worked on it and added a subtle smile. "When I brought it back and showed it to her, she cried," he said. "She put her arms around me and said 'thank you so much.' So, you know you get a lot of positive feedback."

Residents often come in with requests that challenge Moule in new ways. There's always a learning curve for certain techniques and tasks, but at 81, he "looks for any excuse to do mental exercise." He regularly participates in Emeritus classes held in the studio, which help him stay mentally active and engaged with the community.





MORE THAN ART: RECREATION AND RELAXATION

While creativity fuels Clubhouse 4, leisure and wellness also

flourish here. The facility includes locker and shower facilities and one of the Village's favorite pools.

Pool 4 boasts the warmest water in the community, kept at a comfortable 84-86°F year-round. This Olympic-sized pool also offers the longest hours and includes accessible features like a ramp, an ADA-compliant Admiral lift chair and hot pool access.

While there are no lap lanes, lap demarcations on the pool floor help guide swimmers.

Whether winding down after

studio time or starting your day in the water, Pool 4 blends creativity with relaxation.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

If you've never stepped foot on Clubhouse 4 grounds or in any of its studios, discover its energy, possibilities and sense of camaraderie. Individual studio hours vary depending on volunteer availability, so call ahead or stop by to learn more, create, connect or simply try something new and leave inspired.

FINDING ART AND FRIENDSHIP IN THE STUDIO

Robert Wiess is an 82-year-old retired psychiatrist from Cleveland, Ohio. He and his wife Lacey spend their winters in the Village. While they came for the lifestyle, he discovered something unexpected: the art studio.

"I've always been interested in art," he said, "but I was never interested in producing it myself."

That changed during his early years in the Village when he began spending more time in the studio. "I used to be at the studio every other day," he recalled. "It's one of the many great things about the Village. There are so many clubs but the highlight for me is the art studio."

Wiess has taken more than 20 classes through Saddleback Emeritus and the studio, but for him, the real draw is the atmosphere. "The classes really are a lovely treat. The environment is welcoming, supportive and everyone shares their knowledge, and it's really unlike traditional class settings where everyone feels more critical."

He especially enjoys those days when the studio stays open late two evenings a week. "There's a nice quiet energy that has a peaceful tranquility

where you can finish your piece," he said.

Many of the artists he paints alongside have backgrounds in art education and love to share what they know. That shared creativity and teaching energy creates a unique, meaningful environment. "When I walk into each class, I know at least one friend or acquaintance, fellow painter, kindred spirit. Chatting about earlier lives has been a wonderful social catalyst."

Wiess also sees the studio as an answer to a deeper issue. "There is a gender-specific isolation in men as they age," he noted. "Golf and pickleball are two major bonding activities, but the art studio has been my major social place."

Even when he returns to Cleveland for the summer, he misses that connection. "I love the idea of chatting with others and sharing their creativity, even if I'm not particularly interested in the subject."

Above all, the studio brings joy. "The youthful delight that comes out of a drawing, color, fashioning an image onto canvas, it has its own zestful importance. The light of mastery and joy extends past the class in making something with your hands."

CARVING OUT A NEW LIFE

For Everett Vitali, the woodshop at Laguna Woods Village is more than a hobby. It is a place of healing, creativity and connection. Originally from the East Coast, Vitali spent most of his career in Manhattan. A self-proclaimed businessman, he never imagined spending retirement surrounded by sawdust and hand tools.

He and his wife Heather moved to Laguna Woods Village five years ago with dreams of travel. But during their 50th anniversary celebration in India, tragedy struck when his wife passed away unexpectedly at dinner. "I'll never forget the feeling of us going in separate directions," he recalled. His daughter Marisa met him at the airport and has been by his side ever since.

Navigating grief and retirement, Vitali explored Village activities, including archery, bocce and the Foodies Club. He and his daughter also garden together. But the Clubhouse 4 woodshop became his true refuge, decades after he'd last taken shop class in high school.

Though always handy, Vitali never considered himself artistic. That changed when he began building birdhouses. In November 2022, he completed 20 for his first Bonanza event sale and sold them all. Creating with his hands sparked something new.

Now 82, Vitali spends most weekdays in the woodshop and he's the official Monday supervisor. He guides newcomers and refines his craft, currently specializing in wood inlays inspired by the natural grain and shape of the wood. His handmade cutting boards, utensils and oversized tweezers for wheelchair users are both functional and beautiful. He has recently begun experimenting with carvings and walking sticks inlaid with gems from the lapidary studio.



"I never thought of myself as creative," he said. "After my second Bonanza, I told my daughter, 'Marisa, they're calling me an artist.' And she said, 'Well, Dad, you are.'"

What makes the woodshop special isn't just the tools but also the people. While formal classes aren't held for insurance reasons, there's always guidance and encouragement. Vitali and other supervisors mentor beginners, remembering how overwhelming the machines can seem at first. But once someone completes a project, everything changes. "They want to make more. They want to show it to their partner. That pride, that sense of accomplishment is what keeps people coming back."

The woodshop also provides Vitali something deeply personal. He's noticed his heart rate lowers and his body relaxes while he works. "It's a distraction from the physical aches of aging," he said. "But more than that, it gives me purpose."

After just three years in the shop, Vitali still calls himself a novice. But his handcrafted creations and the encouragement he offers others say otherwise. The woodshop has become more than a creative outlet. It's where he has built a second life, one birdhouse, walking stick and meaningful conversation at a time.