

Nick & Tran Ngoc add color to Wylie Senior Rec Center

By Judy Truesdell

You might say Nguyen “Nick” and Tran Ngoc have rocked the Wylie Senior Recreation Center; after already being accomplished cooks, carpenters, and quilters, they discovered they have quite a flare for rock painting.

They were born in Vietnam; Nick came to America in 1968 and Tran in 1971. Nick attended San Diego State College on scholarship, but transferred to the University of Texas in Austin to study petroleum engineering – and to meet his future wife. They met in Austin and were married in 1974. Tran opened a Vietnamese restaurant, Tam Deli & Café, with her sister Tam. Both Nick and Tran shared cooking duties, but Nick also built cabinetry, designed the neon sign, and did a bit of everything else. “I even unstopped the sink,” he said. The restaurant was quite well known in Austin, even garnering newspaper coverage. The Austin American-Statesman wrote about them when a customer asked them to make a heart-shaped cake. “I did two hearts with an arrow through them,” Nick remembers. “He proposed to her, and now they have two kids!”

It was their own kids who brought them to the Wylie area when they sold the restaurant and retired in 2016. They have two children, one of whom lives in Carrollton with two sons, and one of whom lives in Wylie. Nick said his son recommended the community to them, and the Ngocs found a home in a quiet Wylie neighborhood with a large yard, which they enjoy.

They were also impressed with Wylie’s ranking as the #4 Best Place to Raise a Family in the U.S. by Money Magazine. Regarding the community, Nick said Wylie is “a nice town, small if you want it to be, big if you want it to be, and not much problem with bars.”

It was Tran who found her way to the Senior Rec Center first; Nick said she enjoys the center and likes the personnel there. Already a craftswoman, making upcycled handmade art for the garden, she loved the Rock On class in which seniors paint designs on rocks and hide



them around town for kids of all ages to find and re-hide. When Nick saw Tran painting the rocks with their grandson, who had gotten a set of brushes and paints for his birthday, he gave it a try himself. “I like to paint somewhat in detail, as well as from imagination, while Tran likes to paint colorful abstract shapes,” he said. They also put their painted rocks together to form other shapes, such as a flower, for the garden.

Nick said they both support the efforts at the Senior Rec Center and that he “gets into encouraging participants to bring out their ‘inert’ talents.”

As for their 45-year marriage, Nick said, “We understand each other ... and stand each other.” •

Photos courtesy Ngoc family, Wylie Recreation Center, and by Craig Kelly.