

Ladies behind the Scenes



Phyllis McKenzie of Trev's Glass let her grandson Trevor's dream of being a glassblower become her new focus after thirty years in real estate and construction. She fills her office with reference materials on the art and business of glassblowing and joins in on Lampwork Etc.'s Boro Room and the Melting Pot discussion forums. There she learns the needs of glassblowers and sets out to supply them with samples of glass, dichro, and tips. Phyllis keeps used equipment, torches, tools, kilns, samples, and shorts of color to help those just getting started. She also fills the shop with the newest equipment plus the latest glass rods, tubes, and colors and is always happy to share what she has learned. She makes pins and pendants herself, a great way to artfully use all of the leftover pieces of glass and dichro.

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Leslie L. Silverman is the founder of D&L Art Glass Supply. Started in 1974, D&L has grown from a single-item vendor operating out of a vehicle to a full-service art glass supplier with a 42,000-square-foot warehouse. Leslie is an active, hands-on owner who constantly interacts with customers and shares her enthusiasm for art glass with the D&L team, many of whom are practicing glass artists.

After thirty-five years, Leslie still loves being part of the glass industry and believes education makes it grow: The D&L warehouse includes a state-of-the-art classroom where internationally known instructors teach workshops on a wide variety of art glass subjects and where regular free demos and lectures are held for local customers and visitors. A believer in technology, Leslie computerized D&L in 1987, and today D&L features one of the finest websites in the industry.

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Shelia Collins came to Paragon in 2002 as part of the customer service team. She is now the distributor manager and attends trade shows for Paragon. Wherever she goes, she treats customers as friends. Shelia had taught ceramics for many years, but glass was new to her when she started at Paragon. Now she fires glass at home, has her own torch, and collects glass from her favorite artists. At the 2009 Glass Craft & Bead Expo, Shelia was responsible for organizing the shipment and setup of 130 Paragon classroom kilns and the annealing kilns used at the International Hot Glass Invitational. She seemed to be everywhere at once as she checked on kilns and visited customers.

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Jean Robichaud of Nortel, the dynamo from Canada, has in some way had contact with and/or positively affected almost every glass artist and emerging beadmaker. Every so often a real gem surfaces, and such is Jean. She is the neck that turns the head of Nortel. Her cheerful, sincere, hardworking style has earned her and Nortel a well-deserved reputation. Jean maneuvers under the radar quickly, easily supporting artists, distributors, schools, and events with ease and charm. She listens attentively to the requirements of the glass industry and provides the ears and eyes to inform Peter Nortel—Mr. Nortel himself—about the wants of the industry she so fervently supports and loves. With Jean's uncomplicated and straightforward style she can move with ease between all levels of the glass world and effect positive changes for all.

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