

Tyler Dies – Blacksmith Hobbyist

Story by Brian Grest; photos by Tyler Dies

Tyler Dies is a blacksmith. Not by trade – but as a hobby and a passion. Although much of his work is practical (he has built most of his own blacksmith tools), his passion is for the creative and artistic side of things.

Dies is a welder by trade so works with metal almost daily. A Kindersley native, Dies moved to Humboldt in 2007 as his wife pursued a career in the area. Tyler has been working at PAMI as a welder since 2009.

In 2008, his wife, Amy, gifted him with a blacksmith course at the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon. He attended, he learned, and he became hooked.

To fuel his new-found hobby, Dies built his own coal forge in his shop a few years ago. He was able to utilize a hand-cranked forge blower and a few other tools he salvaged from his father-in-law's shop. He also installed an electric blower to keep the coals hot when he steps away from the forge. He prefers coal over gas, acquiring coal through his association with the Saskatchewan Chapter of the Western Canadian Blacksmith Guild.



In a video Dies had shot, he is seen firing up the coal forge for a small demo in his shop. He adds some coal to the forge, lights the coal, and then uses the hand-cranked blower to get the coal red hot. He then inserts the piece of metal he was working with into the forge until it, too, was red hot. Bringing it out, he then begins forming or “swaging” the metal with some of his swaging tools, including some hand tools, his anvil and the power hammer he had recently purchased online. In short time, he has pounded out a beautiful decorative leaf.



He has a number of creations sitting in the shop, including some fondue racks, a hammer he had recently forged for one of his daughters, and an item which interestingly began its new life as a door knocker but sprouted wings and some other details to become an ornamental dragon some 16 hours of labor later. Such is the nature of an artist. Some of his creations can be viewed on Instagram (@tyler.dies).



In our interview, I jokingly asked Dies if he'd ever made horseshoes. He hadn't, and was quick to point out that a farrier needs the blacksmithing skills, but blacksmiths are not farriers as they do not specifically work with horses. I also asked if the History Channel's popular series *Forged in Fire* had been a major influence on him. Although he enjoys the show, he was also quick to point out that his passion for blacksmithing pre-dated *Forged in Fire* by seven years.

One of Dies's recent projects stems from a worldwide blacksmithing challenge in which smiths are challenged to submit a creation from a block of metal 1500mm long and 20mm square (6" long and 3/4" square). Dies's entry is a decorative piece that balances perfectly from a single narrow point.

Although he's seen pictures of other amateur blacksmith's entries online that he believes are much more intricate, he knows the point of the competition is more about challenging and expressing oneself than it is about winning.

