

November 2015

# SEWICKLEY *Living*

AN EXCLUSIVE NEWSLETTER FOR THE  
RESIDENTS OF THE SEWICKLEY VALLEY AREA



Photo by Ray Cordero





**E.K. Smith Landscape Design**

“I love people.” That heart-warming theme came across clearly as I interviewed Elise Keely. This talented artist is a dynamo, full of energy and wanting to “make a difference” in her work. She marries her love of people successfully with her exceptional artistry in landscape design.

Elise, the owner and sole employee of E. K. Smith Landscape Design, welcomed me into her beautiful Sewickley Heights home for the interview. Her sweet dog Finn, a soft-coated Wheaten terrier, did likewise. The home has quite a history. Built in 1927, it was the garage for Jones Estate (Jones of J and L Steel). Elise’s skill transformed the structure into an exquisite two-bedroom cottage. She had a dream and made the transformation happen!

Elise does the same for her clients. She feels strongly about successfully considering history and architecture in her landscape design. Elise explained, “The hard-scape and green-scape have to blend with the structure of the building. Additionally, you have to plan for the short-term and long-term consequences of the design.” With a broad smile, she remembered visiting a very old home in The Heights. She was awe-struck by the forethought the landscape planners had many years ago. Excitedly she hoped, “I want my designs to be like that.” Indeed, Elise’s wish undoubtedly will come true. Just take a fun moment to look at her website. You will see examples of her wonderful work.

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Elise is not keeping her talent to herself. Revisiting her former career as an art teacher, she tutors interns each summer. Juniors in college usually find her on the internet. Elise: “It is a win-win. They get ‘hands-on’ experience and I learn their tech savvy! When they return to school, they are light-years ahead of their peers.”

As you can imagine, Elise has a network of artisans who her work with her -- stone masons, brick layers, arborists, roofers (for entries), etc. She encourages their best work by delivering her home-made goodies to the worksite!

Elise has another important part of her life – her family. Two of three handsome young grandchildren ran around her home during our interview. Elise was happy because her son Aaron and his family had just returned from living in Nairobi. Another son Ben and his wife are expecting their first child.

Let’s hope that these grandchildren inherit Elise’s talent for making our world more beautiful.

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