

# Bike racks add art to downtown

By Shaun Zinck [szinck@beloitdailynews.com](mailto:szinck@beloitdailynews.com) | Posted: Monday, May 12, 2014 4:00 pm

Chances are you've seen Tim Arnsmeier's work in downtown Beloit before.

You may not have noticed, but Arnsmeier, owner of Custom Iron Works in South Beloit, has had his hand in helping reconstruct, rehab and renovate several buildings in the City of Beloit.

The bell tower that holds the American Flag on the newly constructed Phoenix Building was made from steel framing from Custom Iron Works. The new overhang at the Ironworks Hotel also was constructed by Custom Iron Works. Even the railings over at Emerson Hall at Beloit College were made by the business.

"We've done something in almost every building downtown," Arnsmeier said.

His latest creation are unique bike racks that will be at three downtown businesses in Beloit starting this week. Beloit resident Bill Dorr said he was in Minnesota with his wife, Deb, when they saw bike racks in the shape of an actual bike.

"So I called Tim and I thought it would neat if we had some in Beloit," he said. "It's kind of a unique idea to have a bike rack associated with the business it's in front of."

Arnsmeier liked the idea and built three — one black traditional two-wheeled bike, one red old school bicycle with a large wheel in the front, and one coffee cup.

"I like the creative side to this," Arnsmeier said. "I learned how to weld when I was 7 years old. I've been in the steel business for 35 years. It's not a job to me."

Before it was a job. He and his wife, Lynn, opened Custom Iron Works 12 years ago after he was fired from his job. He had started taking on side jobs after his work at a steel shop.

"My boss found out I was moonlighting," he said. "I came to the conclusion that I was tired of working for someone and I should work for myself."

Lynn didn't take the news of his firing so well.

"I was freaking out," she said. "But he said it will be all right and we jumped from employee to employer."

When the economy turned work slowed down, but Arnsmeier's creativity only spiked. Since they didn't have work they had to lay most of their employees off.

"I would be in here reading books, and he would be out there work," Lynn said.

There's a steel bench right inside their office in South Beloit that Arnsmeier made during the downturn. He also built a steel swing bench that their son now has at his home.

"He loves this stuff," she said.

When it came to the bike racks, Arnsmeier was all in. Dorr said he ended up donating them to the city, but he got to pick where they went.

The black bicycle will go in front of Bushel and Pecks, the coffee cup will be out in front of Bagels & More and the red bicycle in front of the Beloit Bicycle Company.

Dorr said the additions should be seen this week just in time for ArtWalk this week in Beloit.