

Couple help bring Asia to Asheville with Kamibashi

Web site, select stores sell paper products, crafts

By Dale Neal
STAFF WRITER

LEICESTER — After seven years of teaching English to Japanese University students, **Chris** and **Kristen Daniels** were ready to come home.

All they needed were new careers and a place to live.

Natives of Chicago, they soon settled on Asheville after hearing the buzz from friends visiting in Japan. As far as making a living, they decided to bring a taste of Japan and the rest of Asia back to Asheville.

From their newly purchased farmhouse in the countryside of Leicester, the couple operate Kamibashi. Kristen Daniels picked the name from the Japanese, meaning "paper bridge."

For the next chapter of their lives, the couple have paved their bridge between two countries with paper products. On their Web site and in select stores, they sell imported Japanese stationery, cards and other Asian arts.

"There's quite an interest in Japanese-style designs from anime (animated cartoons) to manga (comic books) among both teens and adults," Chris Daniels said.

Their latest find is more fun than fine art — a collection of yarn dolls created from a single strand of yarn by Thai villagers. The String Doll Gang offers miniature figures of little devils, monsters, mummies, ninjas, pirates and cartoon characters. "They appeal to grandmothers and museum collectors as well as children, from people with Louis Vuitton purses to kids with tattoos and earrings," Kristen Daniels said.

Ruthanne Kah, manager of M'Press Cards, said customers were "oohing" and "ahhing" over the string dolls when Kristen Daniels brought in samples. "They're very appealing as nifty talismans for rearview mirrors or for people who want to do a display for fall like a Halloween tree," Kah said.

Kah also likes the Danielses' selection of Japanese paper, which can be hard to find in this country. "They're bringing in new things, which have the appeal of the exotic," she said. "The Japanese have such a wonderful history for beautiful paper."

The Danielses would like to



Steve Dixon/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Chris and Kristen Daniels have brought back tiny yarn dolls from Asia, relocating to Asheville to set up a new online business, Kamibashi.

Find out more

Visit www.kamibashi.com. And check out Kamibashi products at M'Press Cards, 61 Haywood St., Asheville, 236-2282.

expand their offerings of fine Asian textiles, which can be used as wall hangings, table runners, place mats or decorative pillow coverings. They're looking to partner with local in-

terior designers to showcase the textiles in a shop.

For now, they're happy to sell online and at select stores like M'Press in Asheville.

"We definitely want to get the textiles going. We're finding Japanese artists who we really like, so we might start doing different products from textiles to lunch boxes," Kristen Daniels said.

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co-owner, Kamibashi