

## Berwyn man turns his passion to gold

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By Andrew Westel

Bruce Buckley of Berwyn stands alongside one of the fine gold leaf lettering signs he created recently.

[Photos](#)



By Cari Brokamp, cbrokamp@mysuburbanlife.com

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Berwyn, IL -

When Bruce Buckley began practicing lettering on the windows of his Berwyn home in the early '70s, no one would have guessed that his childhood passion would become his career — least of all him.

Buckley has spent the better part of 25 years as a radio broadcaster on various stations in the Chicago area, but repeatedly felt a pull back to his first love — a sign making business he started in Berwyn at the age of 12. Over the decades, his mind kept going back to a childhood memory of watching a man paint in reverse lettering onto the inside of a store window, and the feeling of accomplishment he experienced after making signs of his own.

“When I was a kid, I saw a guy working in reverse on this window, hand-painting in imitation gold lettering, and I thought it looked so cool and that I wished I could do it myself,” Buckley said. “People have seen this kind of lettering before but it’s rare. You still see a lot of it downtown but it’s less and less, because it’s so painstaking to produce and it takes a lot of time to do this kind of hand-done piece.”

Now, Buckley remains on the radio, part-time, covering news, weather and traffic for Cicero-based WCEV, 1450 AM, but occupies himself full-time with work in making gold leaf signs with Chicagold Sign Co. The company makes signs of all varieties, but focuses on an increasingly lost art of gold leaf lettering.

The company is one of the last in the area to specialize in the lettering, which uses real gold, varying from 12 to 23 karat, in hand-crafting signs on the inside of glass windows of stores and homes around the Chicago area.

“In the old days, every sign company had at least one really good gold leaf guy,” Buckley said. “Now there are just a handful of guys and ladies who do this work. We’re like the typewriter repairmen of the sign industry.”

Buckley grew up in Berwyn with two artists for parents. He is as passionate about the city as he is about his craft, and has found a way to combine the two. Buckley has done signs for Berwyn businesses including Serendipity Antiques, Over the Rainbow Ice Cream Parlor, Windsor Cigar Depot, Mary Memories Antiques, Exquisite Revisit Antiques, FitzGerald’s and Wishbone Restaurant, as well as at the Berwyn Metra station.

“I don’t know why I’m so nuts about Berwyn, but I am,” Buckley said. “I try to keep my prices a little lower here in Berwyn because I really love to do it. ... My signs can help the town look its best in other people’s eyes, and I want to help the town in anyway I can.”