

Nora Ryszka is a protagonist of peace: personal peace, community peace, and environmental peace. While walking the Michigan City beach with her children in 2018 she recognized that in spite of the best cleaning efforts of the Michigan City Department of Parks and Recreation, the beach was littered by small shards of plastic, and refuse washed onto shore or left by beach users. These could only be picked up by hand.

Nora lives by the motto, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” Starting with her family and friends Nora organized the ongoing community effort to clean the Washington Park beach each Monday.

In the past five years, hundreds of volunteers have shown up with grabbers and buckets maintaining our beautiful lakeshore.

In 2020 Nora expanded her community clean-up to the streets of Michigan City organizing the Great Green Clean. This example of community spirit has resulted in extensive regional media coverage showing off Michigan City as a place where residents love and care for their city and each other.

Nora and her husband, glass artist John Ryszka II, left their hometown in 2003 after determining: “There was no life for us in Michigan City.” Nora said, “Anywhere but here.” In Phoenix, Ariz., they established successful careers in art and education and started their family.

This part of Nora’s story is best told in her own words from an online post:

“In 2016 we decided to move home. We could have gone anywhere, but we were so enthused by the progress in our hometown that we wanted to be a part of the momentum.

“This place that we once had to flee is now supporting us and many others, AS ARTISTS! We have been embraced by the local community, encouraged by the City, and we are grateful for the “out of towners” and tourists. Our art gallery, *The Rising Phoenix Gallery* supports only local and regional artists. We have had opportunities here that we would have never had anywhere else.

“There is always room for progress and growth. Our best can always be better. But the beauty of a small town, and one that is focused on growth and improving, is that it is easy to become involved! If I see something that I think needs improvement, I get to work!

“This misconception that the City officials are catering to the Michigan City elite and only care about the Uptown and tourists is dangerous and divisive. Do not fall into the trap of misinformation and negativity!

“It is the steadfast dedication to progress, a forward-thinking vision, a culture of positivity, inclusive growth, and opportunity that brought me home and the reason I want to stay. We are all in this together and Michigan City is stronger when we work together and support each other.

“There is no place like home.”

