

Teacher Will Lead Construction Of A Tiny House

By [Mike Woody](#)

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Art Teacher James Kitchen is preparing for a new endeavor. He is leading the complete construction of a Tiny House.

With eighteen years of teaching experience, as well as time spent abroad honing his skills, Mr. James Kitchen has accomplished a lot in art education. However, in his first year at Tippecanoe High School, Kitchen is prepared for a new endeavor, which may be small in name, but is a huge undertaking. Kitchen is leading in the complete construction of a Tiny House.

The students in his Home Design class are currently laying the groundwork for the building of a tiny house, made to fit on a 24-foot-long/8-foot-wide trailer. “I didn’t want to teach them how to build a wall, for instance, only to have to tear it down and start again the next year. A tiny house is the perfect scenario as it teaches every single aspect used in building a home,” said Kitchen.

The materials, including the wood for the framing, which was taken from skids, has all been collected or received by donations. Tiny Houses include all the amenities of a standard sized house, but on a smaller scale. It must also be built to withstand movement, as they are often transported on a trailer. The tiny house is expected to be completed in the Spring, and will be open to visitors on an Elevate the Arts Night. The progress will be able to be monitored as the construction will take place outside of the high school.

Kitchen hopes that the tiny house will be purchased, an average cost for one is \$25,000, and the money earned will help fund the construction of another one next year.

A junior in high school before he took his first art class, Kitchen quickly became passionate about the subject. He decided to pursue it

more deeply in college and chose to attend Bowling Green State University, in part because of their strong art program. Another factor in the decision was athletics as Kitchen played football in high school and wanted the opportunity to continue his career in college.

The youngest of five, Kitchen had watched his four brothers play football in high school and felt it was natural that he followed suit. “It was a small town which was fueled by high school football. The stadium held about 5,000 and the town has 4,800 people living in it,” he said.

Originally, Kitchen declared his major as Graphic Design, but was encouraged to choose something less competitive, so he selected Art Education. With several relatives who were teachers and a fondness for working with children having cared for nieces/nephews it was a natural progression.

While at Bowling Green, Kitchen spent some time student teaching in Brazil, at a small school with kindergarten through twelfth grade. The experience was very valuable to Kitchen, especially in the flexibility he gained from switching modes from a second grade class to high schoolers in just minutes. “I learned how to problem solve quickly and change gears to best fit each class according to their grade level and language skills,” said Kitchen.

As an apprentice to a sculptor, Kitchen also ventured to Lithuania. It was shortly after the Berlin Wall was tore down, so the country was adjusting to being free from Soviet rule, and was a real enlightening time for him.

After graduating, Kitchen got his first teaching job in Lebanon in 1997, where he taught art and coached football at a middle school, for three years. He and his wife then moved to Texas where he taught at the high school level. Now back in Ohio, closer to family, Kitchen is glad to be in Tipp City.

No matter where he has taught, Kitchen has always tried to make an impact on those he comes into contact with. “I like to think that I have been a positive influence to all of the nearly 3,000 students I’ve had,” he said.