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Knit Shop weaves community

By Cheryl Tatum
FOR THE STAR NEWS

"In the shelter of each other we live our lives," is Pat Harris' favorite Irish proverb, so it is appropriate that the red-haired, outgoing woman who appears to never meet a stranger has used it as a guiding force behind the operation of her business.

Almost five years ago, Harris, with the help of her daughter, Calyx Harris, opened The Neighborhood Knit Shop in Hendersonville on Walton Ferry Road.

The shop fills an important niche for those who knit and crochet, arts that for many have been handed down through the generations. Harris sells yarns from around the world and patterns for everything from sweaters and Afghans to hats and scarves.

But to those who travel from Nashville and nearby cities to get needed supplies at the shop, it provides so much more.

According to Patsy Finley of Hermitage, the shop is a place for knitters to gather, share their secrets and learn from each other.

"I come because everyone is so nice and friendly, and I have made many friends," Finley said.

Shop fills a unique niche

Operating a successful business today, especially a small business, takes much more than just opening the doors and hoping people walk through them.

Before opening, Harris traveled to other shops in Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio to research how they were stocked and organized.

One thing she knew from the beginning is to be successful her shop had to do more than sell yarn. She also knew she wanted it to be more than a business, but a part of the neighborhood.

"Our motto is, 'We knit neighbors together,'" she said.



The Neighborhood Knit Shop owner Pat Harris helps new student Shelby Callis of Hendersonville cast one stitches during a Saturday morning class. ALL PHOTOS BY CHERYL TATUM/ FOR THE STAR NEWS

In addition to selling knitting and crocheting supplies, Harris teaches lessons, has seminars, brings in guest artists and on Saturday mornings, hosts Knitting in Silence, an opportunity for knitters to gather together and knit in silence for an hour as they pray and meditate.

Just a glance at Harris' Web site, www.neighborhoodknitshop.com, shows the extent of her classes.

Harris teaches three main classes, those she calls value

classes, "New to Needles," "My First Hat" and an intergenerational class where mothers, daughters and grandmothers can learn to knit or crochet together, the same way the skill has been handed down through the generations.

Her classes and instructions make Harris' business more viable, giving her added options and opportunities. They bring in customers and expand her base.

Her customers say Harris' shop is unique, a one-of-a-kind

shop for the middle Tennessee area.

Darlene Titswater of Old Hickory said she found The Neighborhood Knit Shop through the phone book, and she believes it is only place to find yarn and instruction in this area.

Customers become friends

"I have been coming here pretty much since she opened," said Diana Kingsbury of Hend-

ersonville. "It is a wonderful fellowship of women of all ages."

Customers and those taking classes range in age from high school to 80 years, she said, adding they learn from each other and get ideas.

"For so long there was no knit shops like this," Kingsbury said.

According to Harris, all are welcome to drop in during the day, take a comfortable seat and knit, just like settling in to read at the library or bookshop.

She will soon host her third annual Yarn Over, when the shop stays open until midnight and neighbors can come and really settle in for a good time and take advantage of hourly sales.

Harris adds some of her customers have become such good friends; they and their family members have joined together for a cruise.

"Last year we had about 120 people go," she said.

But for most, the main attraction of the knit shop is its unique yarns and the opportunity to share their craft with others and enjoy the friendships made.

Upcoming event

The Neighborhood Knit Shop will host "A Weekend with Maggie" on Friday, Dec. 5 through Monday, Dec. 8

Maggie Jackson is an Irish designer who combines traditional fabrics like Irish Linen with denim, mohair and tweed yarns. She teaches seminars and workshops all over the world. For a schedule of classes and seminars contact Harris, or knit shop manager Sharon Lewis at 264-5886. The Neighborhood Knit Shop is open 1 to 8 p.m. on Monday, closed on Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 4p.m. on Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and closed on Sunday except for scheduled special events. It is located at 109 Walton Ferry Road in Hendersonville.