

# Holiday Spirit

Watch for the third gift guide next Thursday

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE RECORD-EAGLE

Second in a three-part holiday gift guide series

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WHAT'S INSIDE

## Knitting for others a truly 'warm' gift

BY KRISTEN COUNTS  
Special to the Record-Eagle

Knitting, that age-old craft, is enjoying a revival as a hobby.

It is also something warm and lovely to give or receive during the holiday season.

Knitting is becoming hip with people in all walks of life. Not just women, but older children, teens and men are clicking away with their knitting needles.

In fact, Cre Woodard, co-owner (with Mary Turak) of The Yarn Shop in Glen Arbor, said that she has been teaching children as young as second-grade age at Glen Lake Schools. She noted that the students are not so concerned about having a final product; they just like to knit.

So, why all the hype now about knitting? Peggy Serbin, co-owner (with Jane Holdeman) of Inish Knits in Cedar, said she thinks it's a combination of things.

"One person who I would like to thank personally is Julia Roberts, who talked about knitting, which she did on movie production sets and then wore what she made in her movies. People are obviously influenced by celebrities," she said. "I suppose it may be a reaction to feeling insecure in the world today. In the second World War, women would knit and send things over to soldiers constantly. We can sort of use those processes as a way of dealing with something that is very scary. It's a way to keep our hands and minds busy."

"Knitted items are beautiful and, in the end, they have something you made," said Woodard of giving hand-knitted garments.

Serbin feels making something for someone specific in mind is special. "The whole time you're making (a knitted gift), you're thinking of that person. It's a real connecting process," she said.

Is it too late in the year to knit holiday gifts? "It depends on your own speed, the magnitude of the project and the amount of time you'll spend on it.

Scarves are very fashionable and very fast," said Serbin.

Sweaters, hats, scarves, mittens and afghans adorn The Yarn Shop, along with stacks of yarns. There's an abundance of thin scarves, some with small ornaments on the ends, a hot trend. Christmas stockings covers one wall.

The most intriguing thing a knitting shop offers may be the circle of knitters you often find there. The Yarn Shop forms the structure of its circle with a long, plush, lime green couch and rocking chairs draped with afghans. Knitting with impressive speed, yet still able to maintain eye contact, the knitters are welcoming and chat about everything.

"Knitting is so repetitive that you can sit and talk and do it at the same time," said Serbin, also noting, "And if you're by yourself, it's this repetitive motion that allows you to think about other things."

Gerhild Uhl, owner of Lost Art Yarn and Needlepoint Shoppe in Traverse City, said, "It's less expensive than the psychiatrist, even when you buy the most expensive yarn."

Uhl jokingly added, "When knitting, all is well with the world. It must have something to do with the little endorphins."

Knitting can also stimulate the senses. "I think people knit because they like all the colors," said Woodard. "And they just like feeling it."

"It's a great creative outlet," added Uhl. "It gives you something to show for the time sitting in front of the TV."

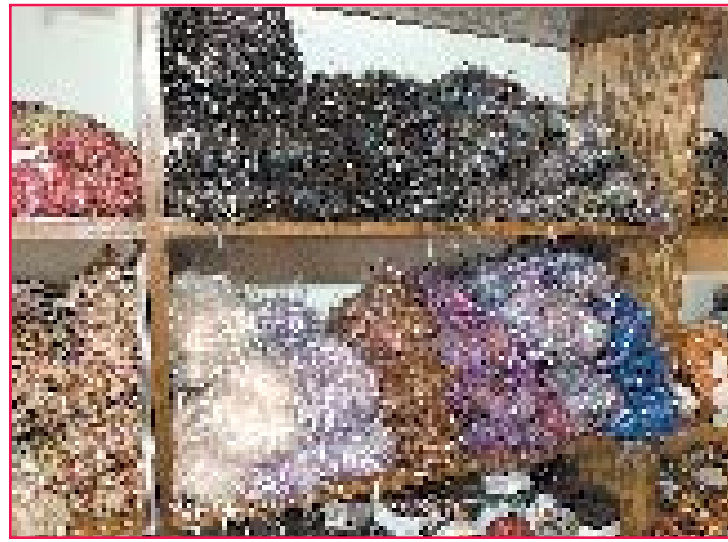
Serbin probably gave the main reason for the appeal of knitting: "Making something yourself has tremendous gratification."

Knitting may appear to be a highly skilled task — and it can be — but the consensus is that anyone can learn to do it.

"Knitting is easy — it's just a loop through a loop through a loop — and then everything else is just a



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell  
Inish Knits in Cedar carries yarns from all over the world. Not only can knitting supplies make great gifts, so can knitted creations.



variation on the same thing," said Woodard.

Serbin added, "With a beautiful yarn, the yarn does all the work. Knitting is very simple. It probably takes 10 minutes to learn to do it."

Sounds easy enough. But is it expensive? "It can be expensive, but it doesn't have to be," said Serbin. "There are some wonderful, American-made yarns that are fun and not expensive. Some places like Ben Franklin are less expensive. I would hate it if anyone thought they could not afford to knit."

Both novice and experienced knitters are offered a variety of opportunities at the shops. Knitting groups, classes and free advice are plentiful as the shops work to share their enthusiasm for their craft with others.

"We will stick with people on a project until the bitter end," said Turak, adding that clients can stay all day

and order out for lunch.

If the local yarn shop owners had their way, everyone would be knitters. More warmth, patience and

understanding in the world couldn't hurt.

Kristen Counts is a local freelance writer.

Coffee shops can offer a break and gift purchase — Pages 3 & 4

Holiday gifts for the young adult in your life — Page 5

Essay: New rules for gift giving to get in the true holiday spirit — Page 6



Those alone on holidays needn't be lonely — Page 7

Doggone it! Holidays can hold hidden hazards for pets — Page 8

Tree-trimming and holiday plant tips — Page 9

Precaution: Expect the unexpected during the holiday season — Page 10

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