

Quilting gifts can offer a creative and warm connection

BY BETHANY BROADWELL
Special to the Record-Eagle

For community residents who believe warm and delightful patchwork can counteract frightful winter weather, several area quilting shops have the goods to piece together their passion this holiday season.

"Quilting is big and getting bigger every day," said Kathryn Ball, owner of the Material Girl Quilt Shop in Traverse City.

While she has a growing number of finished handmade quilts available for purchase, Ball described how her store offers merchandise ranging from a variety of 100 percent quality cottons to an extensive selection of quilting-related books.



and more questions," Ball advised. "I love to work with anyone who has questions, because I find that's also how I learn more."

She explained that quilts are particularly heartfelt holiday gifts because of the time, thought, creative ener-

porate collections," Zervas said. "You may even see quilts used as art in office buildings and hospitals. It gives a more inviting and relaxed atmosphere."

For more, call Quilts By The Lake at 882-4024.

Sharon Kaiser and Laura Hazen, owners of the Quilt-n-Bee store in Traverse City, supported the idea that quilts can soften some of the harsh realities of the world.

"Quilts are a way of wrapping those you care about in love, comfort and warmth," said Kaiser. "The tragedy of 9/11 left us all with a different perspective of what is important in life. We have a greater need to enjoy each moment we share. Quilting not only allows us to spend time with others in a most enjoyable way, but also affords us the opportunity to give a tangible something to those we love."



Record-Eagle/Tyler Sipe

Above left, Kathryn Ball, owner of Material Girl Quilt Shop, has quilted for 15 years. She sells thousands of patterns and has a huge selection of holiday fabrics and patters for the Christmas season, including the 'Shopping Done! Gifts Wrapped!', seen in the background. Above, visiting shoppers Mindy Beveridge and Cathy Sperry check out materials during their weekend in Traverse City.



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Above, four fat quarters, or one yard of fabric, are sold as Christmas Tree Bundles. Below, a quilted tree skirt.

"We stock most everything that a quilter would need to make any size quilt — from a small wall hanging to a large king-size quilt," she said.

Plus, Ball added, "There is always someone available, too, who is eager to assist quilters with selection of colors, patterns and quilt design."

Ball herself has sewn since she was 12 years old. Mostly self-taught, she said she has "made the mistakes to prove it."

Her experience, however, has gone into quilts for generations of her family — her daughters when they were small children and then her grandchildren.

It was 15 years ago that Ball became interested in quilting while she was working as a job recruiter for Bay Health Systems in Bay City. To interest one physician's wife in the position she had to offer, Ball had to research the area's opportunities for serious quilters. In the process, Ball became hooked on the hobby, and the surgeon's wife became her quilt mentor and one of her closest friends.

According to her, a beginner class that teaches the basics is the quickest way to learn to quilt. Visiting a number of quilt shops and getting to know the people who work and shop there, she said, is also helpful.

"Ask questions, questions,



gy and expense that go into making them. For more information, call Material Girl Quilt Shop at 943-5858.

Rebecca Zervas, owner of the Quilts By The Lake shop in Beulah, agreed: "Anyone who appreciates handmade items would love a quilt."

Through her shop, she offers quilting supplies, inspiration for projects, woven rugs, gifts, handmade quilts and wall hangings.

According to Zervas, quilting is gaining in popularity. She described how decorating magazines are using quilts in a variety of ways.

"They are becoming part of both individual and cor-

Staff at the Quilt-n-Bee offer day or evening beginner classes that teach how to create a lap-size quilt, pillow, table runner or wall hanging as well as the supplies it takes to make the projects a success. Class size is limited to six students so each person receives individual attention.

According to Kaiser, "A great beginner pattern that is easy to construct and is adaptable for all sizes of quilts is called 'Yellow Brick Road.'" She added, "Beginners like it because there are no points to match, no fussy cutting or

sewing. It goes together really in an afternoon. The bonus is this random block pattern has more interest to it and doesn't look like a beginner did it."

For further information call Quilt-n-Bee at 922-6766.

Michele Mueller, who has owned the Liberty Quilt Shop in Cedar since 2000, said her shop has an inventory of locally-made quilts for sale. She and her quilters will also work with customers who want to have a custom quilt made to their specifications.

The Liberty Quilt Shop

holds "Open Sew" every Thursday evening. Mueller explained this is a great way to exchange some tips and tricks to make more successful projects. She said, "Quilters like to share what they have learned."

Mueller's interest in quilting began in the late 1980s after she took a family vacation and visited a charming quilt store in Maine. When she returned home, she signed up for a beginning quilt class and that was her start.

Quilts, she said, make fitting holiday gifts, because

they are timeless. "Favorite projects are Christmas stockings, tree skirts, seasonal wall hangings and tree ornaments. Others like to create quilted 'wearables' such as a jacket, vest or purse." Mueller concluded, "From contemporary to country, it is endless."

For more information, call Liberty Quilt Shop at 228-6689.

Bethany Broadwell is a local freelance writer.

she loves to entertain.

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