

## Claire Kennedy: Valley Artisans newest member

BY LINDA SITLER-HOWE

Claire Kennedy is creative, energetic and concerned about others:

- Creative because she makes her own designs or patterns when she knits and crochets.

- Energetic because she has done and continues to do so much with her life and her talents.

- Concerned about others because she sells her creations and donates what she makes to the Jabez Blanket Ministry and other local charities - a tradition she will continue while at the Valley Artisans' Co-operative in Deep River.

The goal of the Deep River and Area chapter of the Jabez Blanket Ministry is to produce beautiful hand-crocheted or knitted blankets that are added to a "Back Pack of Hope" that are then sent to orphanages around the world.

After she moved to Deep River in 2009, Kennedy became involved with this group and has since become the local co-ordinator.

As co-ordinator, she encourages people to donate yarn to the Jabez Blanket Ministry. However, since not all of this donated yarn is suitable for the blankets, Kennedy decided to use these to make headbands and neck warmers.

The various donations meant she had "a beautiful variety of yarn - different fibres, colours, weights and textures to create one-of-a-kind hats, headbands and neck warmers," Kennedy says.

"I love to play with texture and crochet stitches," she adds, "to see if they will work in 'the round' for a hat."

So now instead of using patterns for her hats, and other items, she creates the designs herself.



Claire Kennedy's interest in crochet has blossomed into a project helping orphanages around the world.

Each pattern is so unique that she has a hard time duplicating it again. But not to worry, there are always many more one-of-a-kind items to come from her creative mind.

"To make my product even more unique, I will often use clip-on earrings, broaches or buttons to decorate an applique or the brim of a hat or neck warmer," Kennedy says.

Although most of the yarn used in Kennedy's products is donated, the Jabez Blanket ministry does need money for shipping of the back packs and for other items that also go in them - teddy bears, pencils, pencil cases.

So, any profit she makes from the sale of her products goes to help with the shipping and providing the other items as well as another local charity.

Kennedy's interest in crochet began when she was 16 years old and took a crochet class, following in her mother's footsteps.

Then she was obsessed with intricate doilies and tablecloths.

After that she worked in needle point, cross stitch and embroidery so "crocheting took a back seat - for several years," she admits.

"Like 30 years. Life happens! Marriage, children, jobs, a business or two or three!"

Now crocheting hats is her main interest, although she will still do other projects.

One of her businesses was the DJ Sensations (initials of her two sons) in the Arctic. It was a high-end gift shop that had a lot of Inuit art and jewellery as well as other gifts inspired by the Inuit and the northern landscape.

One of her sons continues to live in the Arctic with his wife and family. The other is in Montreal.

Kennedy adopted an Inuit girl at birth with special needs. Now Kennedy and her teenage daughter live together in Deep River.

"I love to keep busy; I like to do things," Kennedy stresses. "I provide the labour at no cost since crochet is also therapy for me. I love creating useful accessories and then being able to help out worthwhile organizations."

You can find a selection of Kennedy's work at the Valley Artisans' Co-op gallery on Hwy 17 in Deep River.

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