

Sisters turn craft hobby into Brentwood business

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BRENTWOOD -- Those who think needlepoint and sewing crafts are limited to pillows and picture frames might change their views of the art after a visit to the new Nashville NeedleWorks store.

There's thread made from alpaca fur as well as metallic strings. Canvases aren't just flat anymore. Needlepoint can be applied to stand-up products to create 3-D creatures -- Halloween ghosts, Christmas reindeer and more.

"It's not your grandma's needlepoint. Now we have hundreds of different fibers and thousands of different colors. There's polyester, bamboo and 100-percent silk, just to name a few materials," said Emily Hennessy, one of three sisters who opened the shop in May.

The other family business owners are Jennifer Thorman and Lisa Rusche, who with her husband, Bud, also took over management of The Brentwood, a bed and breakfast inn, from parents Ly Anne and Dick Thorman.

The shop also includes items for those who work in cross stitch and embroidery. Crafters can browse more than 500 hand-painted canvases or just strike out on their own.

"You really don't have to be an artist. We've got many things that are just perfect for beginners. Some of our customers have just discovered needlepoint. They like to keep busy and have a hobby. You've just got to use your imagination and find something you like to do," Rusche said.

In the bright white interior of the store, which is sandwiched between Sweet Pea's Cafe and Brides by Sugar Drop off Church Street in Brentwood's Town Center area, several tables and chairs invite crafters to the sit-'n'-stitch program. Soon, the owners hope to start some parent/child classes as well. "It's great to do together and is really good for developing hand-eye coordination," Hennessy said.

Needlepointers since they were young, the sisters decided the time was right to turn their long-time hobby into a full-service shop that features kits ranging from beginner to advanced as well as stitching services. There is no other store quite like it in the area. And with a struggling economy, homemade crafting is making a comeback.

"You can spend so little and do so much. There are really no limits or boundaries," Hennessy said.

Her sister agreed that the wholesome hobby is making a rebound.

"It gives a lot of pride and a sense of accomplishment to see a finished project," Rusche said.

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