



*A Word to the Wise*



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# Seasonal Changes



ROSE CALLAHAN



## on our cover

### IT'S A HOOT!

Skeins of Plymouth Yarn's Baby Alpaca Grande Tweed, perfectly twisted, turn into owls with the addition of cast-iron eyes and feet from [www.atwestend.com](http://www.atwestend.com).

### ATOP OUR SMART COLUMNS

Lorna's Laces mohair/wool-blend Grace is a bouclé that comes in dozens of beautiful colors. Learn more about Beth Casey, owner of Lorna's Laces, on page 48.

### CORRECTION

In our August issue, we listed the wrong address in our profile of Eat, Sleep, Knit's 14,000-square-foot location (which we incorrectly cited as 3,600 square feet). Find the giant bricks-and-mortar source for hand-painted yarn at 6400 Highlands Pkwy, Suite I, Smyrna, GA 30082.

Fall has finally arrived! After a nonexistent spring and a brutally hot summer that still seemed to fly by, I know we on the East Coast are welcoming the drop in the mercury. At one point, the entire country save the Pacific Northwest was experiencing record high temperatures, and we know that that kind of weather does little to inspire people to pull out balls of wool. But we can't just blame the weather. This year has been a hard one for many yarn shops; the continued strain on the economy and uncertainty surrounding the upcoming presidential election have both played a role in smaller sales.

But life goes on, and many yarn shops continue to not only survive but to thrive. To really prosper, however, sometimes you have to move on. Relocating your store—whether for more square footage, a better location or the chance to customize your space—can be an essential step in taking your business to the next level. Leslie Petrovski spoke with several store and company owners who recently made the leap (“A Moving Story,” page 44). You can learn a lot from their experiences.

If you're looking to add stock without a lot of up-front investment, consider consignment, a tried-and-true business model that can be lucrative with the right attention to details. Daryl Brower started hearing about the trend from shop owners as she researched recent Smart articles; read about what she learned in “Consignment Alignment” (page 36). Especially with gift-giving season soon upon us, having items that aren't necessarily made of yarn on hand can boost sales among those shopping for the knitters and crocheters in their lives.

If there's one constant in the world of knitting, it's our desire to keep everyone warm. As we near the season of giving, I know that many of you are looking at ways to support those less fortunate in your communities. Many shops have made it their mission to help people in need. Cheryl Kremetz talked to a few to find out about the programs they've set up and how these programs have not only made a difference but also impacted their bottom lines (“Charity Begins at Home,” page 40).

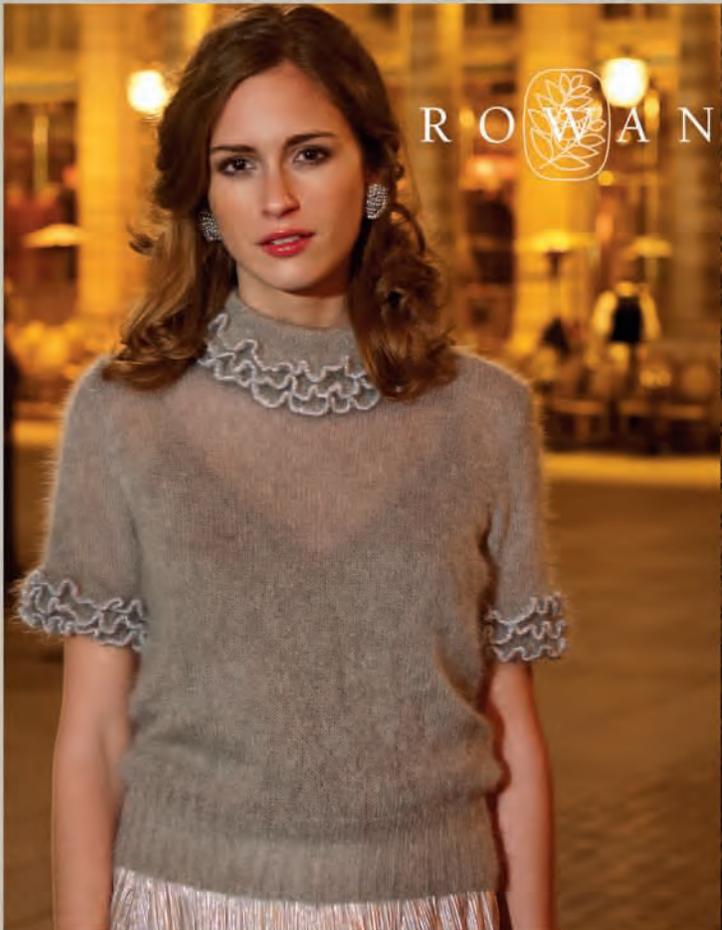
I wish you a prosperous fall and end of the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin".

Erin Slonaker,  
Editor in Chief



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Magazine Publishers of America  
Manufactured and printed in the United States of America

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The next issue of YMN will mail on December 18, 2012

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## Trade Secret

Canada shares a broad border—not to mention a broad yarn market—with the United States. But for LYS owners and indie yarn or pattern companies from the True North, traversing the 49th Parallel for even one of TNNA's biannual shows has long presented a daunting logistical and financial hurdle. "It's a huge expense for Canadians to get to TNNA," says **Lynda Gemmell**, who has made the trip from Ontario to the Long Beach and Columbus markets nine times to promote **Cabin Fever**, the design company she owns with her sister, **Deb**. "Every time we came home from TNNA, we'd say, 'We should have something like this in Canada.'"

So three years ago, they took it upon themselves to create **Knit Trade**, a daylong market held each September in Stroud, Ontario, about an hour north of Toronto, that caters specifically to the needs of Canadian yarn shops and companies. "We've geared it differently than TNNA," says Lynda, who reached out to smaller suppliers and "interesting independent companies" on the Canadian scene. Vendors from the 2012

show included **Estelle Yarns, Jojoland, Gemini Fibers, A Needle Pulling Thread, Infiknit, Fiber Trends** and **PolarKnit**, with a few bigger names—**Westminster Fibers, Soak, Louet** and Canadian mainstay **Briggs & Little**—making an appearance for good measure. Though LYSOs can place orders during the show, Knit Trade emphasizes its cash-and-carry component, allowing retailers to shop on Saturday and open their doors on Sunday with new stock on their shelves. "The cash-and-carry [aspect] is really nice," says Deb Gemmell. "Vendors effectively pay for the show immediately, and the stores get to show customers something new right away."

To maintain a manageable yet healthy balance of sellers to buyers, the Gemmells place a limit on the number of vendors and attendees, though they do encourage retailers to bring staff members along. "Having a team come and look at product is very good for the wholesale process," Lynda says. Because many participants must drive up to six hours to reach the curling arena that houses Knit Trade, the Gemmells do everything possible to make the trip worthwhile. The

market opens relatively late, at 11 A.M., so vendors traveling a long way have extra time to set up. The sisters provide coffee and donuts in the morning; lunch and electricity are also included in the vendor fee. "When we go to shows, we know how we like to be taken care of, so we do the same for our vendors," Lynda says. There's also an agency program that allows far-flung companies—based, say, in the Maritime Provinces or on the West Coast—to ship merchandise to the show and pay for someone on-site to man their booths, which Deb says has proved to be a beneficial prospect.

As for store owners, early registrants have their \$30 registration fees refunded at the door in vendor dollars, which ensures a baseline of sales on the floor, and all retailers receive a goodie bag filled with samples. "The feedback has been great," Deb says. "Store owners get the personal relationship with companies they don't get from dealing over the phone or e-mail, and our vendors are coming back each year." Keep an eye out for news about the 2013 show at [www.KnitTrade.com](http://www.KnitTrade.com).

## Barre Belle

"Everything is beautiful at the ballet." That sentiment, first sung by Kelly Bishop on the original cast album of *A Chorus Line*, also serves as Brenda Maben's modus operandi. As costume designer for the just-renewed ABC Family dramedy **Bunheads**, set in a small-town dance school, Maben garbs Bishop, along with costar

Sutton Foster and a corps of young dancer/actresses, in a lissome array of leotards, layers, lounge wear and, whenever possible, hand knits.

*Bunheads'* premiere season featured a tantalizing taste of Maben's own handiwork: a market



bag for Foster's character, Michelle; a lacy pink pullover frequently worn by ballet student Melanie (Emma Dumont); a shrug for classmate Ginny (Bailey Buntain), reconstructed from a cut-up thriftshop sweater [see photo]. One yarny item that's not handmade, despite the scripted premise—a bun snood Ginny presents to ballet classmate Boo (Kaitlyn Jenkins) in an early episode.

"Everything happens so fast on set," Maben says. "I'd injure my hands if I had to knit all the things we need." The ballet-studio setting, says Maben, is "a natural for knits"—she's stitched up a bunch of dramatic scarves and shawls, arm warmers and as-yet-to-be-filmed sweaters, all ready for the show's return in early 2013. "When the show comes back, you'll see a lot more," Maben promises.

## Knitting Gets Animated

Animators and graphic artists have long been able to clothe an animated character easily in a representation of cloth, but to simulate a hand knit they would have to exactly model every stitch in 3-D, a prohibitively time-consuming process. But a collaboration headed by a pair of associate professors at **Cornell University** has led to a groundbreaking new method for simulating knitted fabric. "We are actually changing the shape of the yarn loops that make up the stitches, simulating how they wrap around other loops," explains **Steve Marschner**, one of the Cornell developers.

Marschner and his colleagues researched the way stitches interlock and behave from several hand-knitting texts, including *Knitting for Dummies*, Barbara Walker's fourth *Treasury* and the *Vogue Dictionary of Knitted Stitches*. Then they created a sampling of pattern images to demonstrate the versatility of their discovery—fingerless mitts, a triangular shawl, a tea cozy, a sweater dress, even a whimsical pullover for a sheep (*below*). The results are such that a variety of stitch patterns (think ribbing and cabling) can be utilized to garb animated characters, be they human or anthropomorphized.

Given that Pixar is one of the driving forces supporting this research—also funded by the National Science Foundation, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation—don't be surprised if you soon see plenty of simulated knits modeled by a menagerie of animated movie stars in a theater near you.





## Pop Goes the Yarn Shop

With apologies to those readers who finally banished “Call Me Maybe” from playing on continuous loop in their heads, we now cast your attention back to the summer’s ubiquitous hit for a good reason. At press time, “Cast On Baby”—a video spin on Carly Rae Jepsen’s ultimate earworm, performed by the tuneful denizens of **KnitKnack in Maplewood, New Jersey**—had reached an astonishing 39,510 YouTube views, further proof that a strong online video can be a true boon to retail branding.

“It’s amazing. Every night the hit count goes up by another thousand,” says KnitKnack owner **Meera Kothari Cho**, who has received nothing but positive attention since the video posted on August 17. The first two lines—“I saw the yarn on the shelf/I couldn’t stop myself”—start this anthem of yarny admiration. Armed with a lyric sheet, an iPhone video camera and a simple digital point-and-shoot, Cho and her tech-savvy 11-year-old daughter shot the video over a week, asking customers if they’d like to lend their voices and ham it up. Though Cho had a ringer lined up to overlay the main track (knitting teacher **Kari Capone**, who croons the lead, is a trained jazz vocalist), such a diverse group joined the sing-along that she ended up showcasing the depth and breadth of KnitKnack’s clientele. “What you see is exactly our community,” Cho says. “We’re a family-run business, so we’ve got kids in here all the time, and we have a bunch of male customers. The whole gang is in it, including our Friday Knit Nighters and a very good yarn enabler, the boyfriend of one of our customers. Everyone sang, which was the spirit of it. It came together perfectly.” Watch the talented crew at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSjsOeC6OcE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSjsOeC6OcE).

## Transitions: Acquisitions

On July 31, **F+W Media** acquired **Aspire Media**, the parent company of **Interweave Press** since 2005. As a result of the undisclosed deal, F+W has obtained the entire Interweave portfolio, which includes its busy magazine and book divisions, 33 art and craft websites, 10 online communities, 11 consumer events and a trio of PBS craft television programs. Aspire/Interweave CEO Clay Hall and CFO Troy Wells have both left to pursue other business opportunities.

Interweave’s 10 e-commerce stores now join F+W’s 20-plus, growing the company’s direct-to-consumer database. According to a press release, other immediate plans focus on vertical platforms, including “an increased number of digital magazine/content launches through the...Interweave digital newsstand; an expansion of the e-commerce, e-book and digital-pattern business; and an expansion of the live and online education and event business.” This is F+W’s second large craft acquisition of the year, having purchased sewing-industry powerhouse the Martha Pullen Company in February.

Meanwhile, the newly renamed **Annie’s** (formerly **DRG**) acquired **Candice Jensen Productions** at the end of August, overseeing future production of the Emmy Award-nominated **Knit and Crochet Now!** The four-year-old how-to show, says creator Candi Jensen, “reaches more people than any other knit and crochet show on TV.” Broadcast on the Create Channel, **Knit and Crochet Now!** will continue to be hosted by **Brett Bara** and feature knitting experts **Kristin Nicholas** and **Maggie Pace** and their crocheting counterparts, **Robyn Chachula** and **Drew Emborsky**.



## Chelsea Gable

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Chelsea Gable in an auto accident over Labor Day weekend. As the online voice of **Classic Elite Yarns**, she was responsible for their social media outreach, including the web e-letter. Originally from New York City, Chelsea was an avid knitter, completely consumed by the craft. We at *Yarn Market*

*News* got to meet her at the most recent Smart Business Conference in Boston, and our condolences go out to her family and friends.

## Cream-of-the-Crop Hop



As our August 2012 article “Learning to Crawl” demonstrated, yarn crawls can give a business boost to multiple yarn stores in a given area. But what’s an LYSO to do if she runs the only shop around?

Take a page from **Patty**

**Armstrong**, owner of **Sweet Pea’s Yarn & Gifts** in St. Clair, Michigan, who’s organized a shop hop with a pair of specialty craft boutiques that complement, not duplicate, the yarn arts.

On the cusp of the holiday gift-giving season, the weekend of November 16, Sweet Pea’s will join nearby River Place Quilt & Sew and Red Mudd pottery studio in the **Hand ‘N’ Hand X 3 tour**, an opportunity for clients of all three businesses to “experience the handmade” in disciplines they might never have considered trying before. Armstrong has a standing relationship with both outlets: Sweet Pea’s and River Place, a mile apart, have created shop-crossover projects—lined knit purses and a stitched quilt backed with fabric blocks—and Armstrong sources ceramic buttons and yarn bowls from Red Mudd, about a 15-minute’s drive away. “I thought combining the three stores would make a unique match and be a different twist on things,” Armstrong explains.



A passport has been printed, and each destination will host events like demos, make-and-takes, raffles and a mini art fair. Refreshments and door prizes will be provided, and hoppers who complete the handmade triathlon will be entered into a gift-basket drawing.

Armstrong is already hearing that customers are excited



about bringing along crafty folks who may not knit or crochet but are interested in quilting, sewing or pottery. “We’re hoping this event will introduce us to a group of crafters we can cross-reference,” she says. Find out more about Hand ‘N’ Hand X 3 at [www.SweetPeasYarn.com](http://www.SweetPeasYarn.com).

## Hot Button Topic

File this one under “Why didn’t anyone think of that before?” **Hot Item Buttons** from **Ewe Ewe Yarns** are campaign-style buttons that call attention to whatever skein or sample garment you pin them to, acting as removable—and eminently reusable—LYS shelf talkers. The 3-inch pin-backed buttons currently come emblazoned with a trio of marketing slogans: “New!/What to Knit Now,” “1 Skein Project” and “Class Project / Sign Up Today.”

The buttons were designed by **Heather Walpole**, a graphic designer and the force behind Ewe Ewe’s Woolly Worsted yarn and pattern line, on request from **Debra Paradis** of **Yarning for You** in San Marcos, California, where the prototype pins were a big hit. The buttons pin onto a garment, a mannequin or the yarn itself without doing damage, and they’ve already proved to be an eye-catching aid. Says Walpole,

“People really noticed new items, and [Paradis] was also getting more responses on class sign-ups” from customers who spied the Class Project button secured on displayed models. “It’s such a great idea, and it’s easy for me to come up with more ideas,” says Walpole, who plans to expand the Hot Item Buttons offerings. The buttons are available bundled per slogan, 10 for \$20, or in a combo package, 10 of each slogan for \$60. Learn more at [www.EweEwe.com](http://www.EweEwe.com).



## Stocking Stuff

‘Tis the season for gift buying. Feed your customers’ impulse purchasing with these stocking-scaled products.

**Knitter’s Pride** ([www.KnittersPride.com](http://www.KnittersPride.com)) is just the second needle company to use a form of high-tech carbon fiber to create a line of sticks. The resulting lightweight **Karbonz needles**, says vice president **Shirish Jain**, have a cylindrical shape, “great tensile strength and just the right surface for the stitches to move nicely along the needle body.” They’re available as single points, double points and circulars, in sizes from U.S. 0 (US 00000 for the dpns) to 4.

An intriguing combination of the Far East and the American West, the **Special Edition Mindy Combo** case (*below, middle*) from **Lantern Moon**



([www.LanternMoon.com](http://www.LanternMoon.com)) sports a Vietnamese silk-taffeta interior and a fleecy natural lambskin exterior from **Imperial Stock Ranch**. The case was born at the premiere Vogue Knitting LIVE Destination weekend held at the ranch and incorporates lambskin that would have otherwise been discarded.

**Fix-a-Stitch** ([www.FixAStitch.com](http://www.FixAStitch.com)), the tool with hooks on either side that allows knitters to easily reloop dropped or botched stitches, now comes in a lace-weight model. The size 0 gizmo, in the same standout pink as the larger three sizes, is designed to save lots of frustrating openwork tinkling.

Pilling can ruin the effect of the most meticulously crafted hand knit. **Gleener** ([www.Gleener.com](http://www.Gleener.com)) is a razorlike tool (*below, far right*) that has a built-in handle lint brush and three dedicated fabric-sensitive blades to tackle different-sized pills and a variety of fibers without damaging the fabric.

Soprano **Melanie Gall** ([www.MelanieGall.com](http://www.MelanieGall.com)), one half of the duo behind the **Savvy Girls** knitting podcast, has recorded a CD called **Knitting All the Day**. During WWI, songs about homefront knitting in Canada were common. Gall researched and resuscitated 14 of these heartstring-tugging tunes, including “Every Stitch a Thought of You,” “There’s a Girl Who Is Knitting for You” and “Stick to Your Knitting.”

**Nadine Curtis**, the founder of **Be Sweet**, has put together a new journal for knitters. **Knit Notes** (Sixth&Spring Books) features templates for organizing your notes on a project, a design reference covering garment shapes and measurements, and plenty of graph paper for charts and schematics.

## Medal Count(down)

As the United States racked up medal after medal at the XXX Olympiad this summer, the folks at **Jimmy Beans Wool** were kept busy knocking down the price of a yarn specially created to celebrate the Games. The popular Reno yarn purveyor—again named to *Inc.* magazine’s annual Top 5,000 list of fastest-growing private companies—had promised that for every medal won by a U.S. athlete, the price of Lorna’s Laces’ “London 2012” colorway, a shop exclusive in three weight classes, would drop by a certain price point—\$.05 for gold, \$.03 for silver and \$.01 for bronze. The results of this “Medal Madness,” not unlike those on the Olympic podium, exceeded expectations. “It was our best-selling color ever and by far the most successful promotion we’ve ever run,” says owner **Laura Zander**.

Medal Madness kicked off with an attendant social-media splash on the day of the Opening

Ceremonies, and the price was gradually adjusted throughout the games on the shop’s website, Twitter feed and Facebook page so “customers could visibly see the price dropping with every medal,”

says **Kristen Ashbaugh**, Jimmy Beans’ social-media lead. “I think this helped to keep people coming back to check on the progress.

It was definitely a lot of fun to see customers engaging.” The final total—106 medals for Team USA, for a savings of \$3.46

per “London 2012” skein, bringing Honor and Sock down

to \$20.54 and Worsted to \$16.54. “Bottom line: The customers loved it,” says Zander. The concept was so

successful, she believes it could work equally well

during a regular-length sports season. Zander advises

shops to order an exclusive yarn dyed in the home

team’s colors to celebrate opening day, then adjust

the price down—or, boldly, “even up!”—based on

wins and losses over the course of the season.





## Cab Fare

If you were able to hail a cab on the busy streets of Manhattan this September, you might have been treated to a yarny surprise once the meter started running. **The Yarn Co.** was a featured retail destination on Taxi TV, the in-ride entertainment service diverting riders' attention in New York City cabs. The shop was one of three highlighted stores in a short Upper West Side shopping guide; the clip was produced by NBC and anchored by *Open House* and *New York Live* host Sara Gore.

Owner **Tavy Ronen** was thrilled to have been contacted by NBC. "It's something I had been thinking about; every time I sat in a cab, I'd wish the store could be on that screen," says Ronen. Filming was brief, with the crew "in and out faster than you can say boo." The clip captured the color and life of the shop, which is becoming somewhat of a media magnet. (The Yarn Co. made recent appearances on the *Martha Stewart Living* satellite radio show "Morning Living" and served as a backdrop to an episode of the VH1 reality show *Why Am I Still Single?*) During the Taxi TV run, customers were encouraged to snap a picture of the cab's screen, then bring it into the shop for a free pattern book. "A lot of people called or wrote, 'We saw you on Taxi TV,'" Ronen says. Though the airing's over, the shop gets to link to the segment from here on out; see it at [www.TheYarnCo.com](http://www.TheYarnCo.com).

## Happy Talk

Nothing makes retailers happier than increased sales. So leave it to the founder of the **Knit Happy** product line to come up with an in-shop marketing program that will help them do so. Through her crafty **Knit Happy Club**, **Karen Frederickson** preplans every facet of what is essentially an ongoing in-store yarn party, complete with food, knitting know-how, patterns and activities that give attendees a fun incentive to explore every nook and cranny of a yarn shop.

"The main focus is to help sell inventory on club day," Frederickson explains. "In a typical class, customers come in, put their heads down and never leave their seats." By having club goers partner up, walk around the store and select, say, the five yarn-related items with which they'd want to be marooned on a desert island, then share their picks with the group, retailers instantly "get as much product in front of customers as possible. People have their own shopping patterns; if they don't knit with novelties or baby yarn, they don't typically look in those areas. This engages customers in the entire store."

After the activity, time is built in for attendee show-and-tell, after which there's a platform for the owner to deliver store news; then comes the knitting. Each session focuses on a technique meant to stretch knitters' skill sets and is backed up by an exclusive pattern that's based on yarn weight, not brand, so retailers can recommend a yarn from their stock. Snacks served during the club event—meant to last between 90 minutes and two hours—can include the tried-and-true recipe Frederickson writes up for each newsletter. All activities are easily altered to fit the shop's personality and appeal to the specific interests of its clientele.

In formulating the club, Frederickson drew both on her background in marketing and her involvement in the quilting industry, where she's seen "tons of programs like this." Retailers can purchase a flash drive including enough newsletters for a six-month (\$200) or a nine-month (\$250) club stint, either of volume 1, introduced in 2011, or the most recent volume 2. The zip drive



comes loaded with two versions of each newsletter—one for the host, the other for attendees—and member shops receive Knit Happy Club tote bags and bag tags as sign-up incentives, monthly tip sheets, "Ask Me About the Knit Happy Club" marketing buttons for staffers to wear and customizable shop fliers and bag stuffers; they also get 10 percent off any Knit Happy wholesale order and can purchase an exclusive Happy Hands manicure set. After joining up, LYSOs set their own fee for customer participation, averaging about \$10 a month. Results, Frederickson reports, have been strong. Cottage Knits in Columbus, Indiana, regularly hosts 60 happy knitters per month, and other shops have seen sales on club day jump by as much as \$700, more than covering the one-time membership fee. Some owners even offer a \$10-off coupon to attendees who bring a snack to share, further lightening their hosting workload. "The primary goal," says Frederickson, "is healthier yarn stores." Find out how to get Happy at [www.IKnitHappy.com](http://www.IKnitHappy.com).

## Air Time

**Zealana** recently had a major hit with the limited-edition pearl-fiber blend the New Zealand-based company whipped up to commemorate *Vogue Knitting's* 30th anniversary, traditionally celebrated with pearls. The luxury offering was so sought-after, it was all but gone days after the magazine's fall issue featuring the unique skein was released. Zealana now continues its commitment to high-end innovation by introducing the first yarn in its new **Luxuria** series: **Air**, an ultrasoft luxury blend said to be lighter and warmer than 100 percent cashmere. The one-of-a-kind blend—combining 40 percent New Zealand brushtail possum down, 40 percent cashmere and 20 percent mulberry silk—comes in four shades (natural, slate blue, Tuscan red and charcoal) and retails for \$25 per 25g, 191-yd ball. Air is available through Zealana's U.S. distributor, the **Yarn Sisters**; learn more at [www.TheYarnSisters.com](http://www.TheYarnSisters.com).



## Where's Your Hat?

Hat-knitting season has blown in on a brisk wind. Inspired by **Woolly Wormhead's** hat-heavy TNNA booth, we went searching for the perfect fixture for displaying hats—and we think we've found it. Folding wire wig stands, spare but shapely, maintain a hat's structure while keeping all the focus on the finished object, not on a molded mannequin face that competes for attention. Search online or go to [www.acewigs.com/shop/wigs/Accessories/2561.php](http://www.acewigs.com/shop/wigs/Accessories/2561.php) for an example. Let us know if you've found another great way to display hats by e-mailing [ymninfo@yarnmarketnews.com](mailto:ymninfo@yarnmarketnews.com) or posting a picture on our Facebook page.

## High-Fiber Diet

Feast your eyes on this tempting LYS exhibit. **Bonnie Burton**, co-owner of **Colorful Stitches** in Lenox, Massachusetts, stitched up a bounty of inedible but nonetheless delectable dishes as part of the shop's ongoing internal yarn-bombing. Inspired by two pattern books—**Susie Johns' Knitted Fast Food** and **Susan Penny's Knitted Cakes**—and using techniques gleaned from sources ranging from knit blogs to **June Hemmons Hiatt's The Principles of Knitting**, Burton knit the soup-to-nuts menu in secret, surprising her colleagues with a smorgasbord of starchy fun: pancakes topped with blueberries and syrup, a bowl of cereal with individually knitted flakes, hot dogs and hamburgers, a



lobster dinner with a tub of drawn butter, shish kebabs, a bottle of Pinot Noir, a chocolate layer cake with I-cord swirls of icing. Once Burton got going on the display, which graced **Colorful Stitches'** window this summer, she found it hard to stop: As she wrote on the shop blog,

“My husband even suggested that I knit Thanksgiving dinner this year and skip all the cooking.”

## Booth Buddies

If you attended the most recent TNNA show in Columbus, you couldn't help but notice that independent designers were out in force. This impressive show of creativity was facilitated by **Deep South Fibers**, the indie-pattern distributor that represents more than 60 designers. Inspired by a setup she'd seen at the International Quilt Market in Houston, owner **Donna Higgins** put word out to her roster that she'd secured a block of booths surrounding the company's main base; designers who wanted a presence at the show could take a half- or full-size booth, singly or in pairs. A full third of Deep South designers jumped at the chance, taking up a total of 20 booths and bringing what Higgins calls “a positive energy” to the market floor.

“When you walked through the booths, you could see a distinct difference from one designer to the next,” she says. “A lot of folks were amazed at the footprint; they didn't realize we worked with so many different people.” Ysolda Teague had the largest presence, with four booths set up like a mini yarn shop. Woolly Wormhead displayed more than 100 hats on wire wig stands in her half-booth. Other half-booth displayers included Hill Country Weavers, Cocco-knits, Shetland Trader and Grace Akhrem, while several others chose to marshal forces: Miriam Felton with Imagine Knit, The Yarniad with Ann Kingston, Olgajazzy with Army of Knitters, Crafty Diversions with Pam Powers Knits, Tot Toppers/WIGU with Kniterella, Francine Toukou with French Press Knits and Dull Roar with Tiny Owl Knits. “I found it interesting who decided to buddy up—designers I wouldn't have thought would pair well [aesthetically] but who turned out to create this beautiful marriage,” Higgins says.

Higgins coordinated the logistics, providing a mirror or mannequin where needed. But the designers did their own heavy lifting and paid their own way, “a small investment for [an opportunity to] show their style and meet the customer,” says Higgins, who plans on doing it all again next TNNA. “It was a way for retailers to recognize that they still have a need for pattern support for their walk-in customers. And it sent a strong message that we're here to stay.” See Deep South's full catalog at [www.DeepSouthFibers.com](http://www.DeepSouthFibers.com).

## Keeping Good Company

On page 40 of this issue, we discuss a slew of LYS-driven charity efforts. Yarn companies are no slouch in this arena, either. Here's the skinny on two recent company-led charity drives that caught our attention for generating plenty of loot for their beneficiary causes while giving a bit back to the generous customers who pitched in.

**Jordana Paige** raised \$13,150 for the Preeclampsia Foundation through a two-day sale of imperfect handbags in July that proved so popular, it was extended by a week. Purchasers gained by being able to buy a nearly flawless JP bag for roughly half the retail cost. The company donated all profits to increase awareness about and improve care for the 300,000 mothers and babies annually affected by the hypertensive disorder that can occur during pregnancy and childbirth. This was a truly personal cause for owner **Jordana McVey**, whose sister lost a son, Cooper, as a result of preeclampsia.

**Cephalopod Yarns**, meanwhile, conducted a four-month drive to amass hand-knit items to bolster the most recent **Afghans for Afghans** collection. In return for a knitted item—a hat, a pair of mitts, a scarf—the knitter received a code for \$32 to spend at the Cephalopod online shop, enough to cover one skein of the company's best-selling Bugga. In addition, all participants were entered into a lottery for a grand prize—a \$200 code. Fans of the company—which began life as the Baltimore studio of The Sanguine Gryphon—responded in force, sending 500-plus items for co-owner **Sarah Eyre's** favored charity.

## SMART MOVE: Real-Life Results from YMN's Smart Business Conference

**Ann Falcone** and **Kathleen Asherah**, owners of **The Village Knitter** in Babylon, New York, attended their first YMN Smart Business Conference this year. After they returned, they let us know that they “thoroughly enjoyed the conference and learned a lot,” implementing much of what they gleaned from Rafael Mael's session “Marketing in a Challenging Economy.” Among the proactive steps they've taken since March:

- “We put a section on our website for customer reviews and also added a slide show.”
- “We added the ability to send text messages to customers when new shipments come in.”
- “We added our shop to Foursquare, complete with mayor's specials.”
- “Although we already had a Facebook page, we are promoting it on at least a weekly basis (we're aiming to do this daily). This goes for our newsletter as well; we had one but are now more committed to it.”

The results: An increased social-media presence that has led to the shop's earning a healthy number of positive Yelp reviews.

Have you adopted a strategy that you learned at a Smart Business Conference? Let us know at [yminfo@yarnmarketnews.com](mailto:yminfo@yarnmarketnews.com) and we may use your story in a future issue. Our next conference is at Baltimore's Four Seasons from March 10–12, 2013; watch *YMN's* website, Facebook page and Twitter feed for registration information.

## YMN CALENDAR

Events to keep you in stitches this fall. (For more, visit [www.yarnmarketnews.com](http://www.yarnmarketnews.com).)

### October 11–14

#### Stitches East

Connecticut Convention Center  
Hartford, Connecticut  
[www.knittinguniverse.com](http://www.knittinguniverse.com)

### October 12–14

#### Creativ Festival

Metro Toronto Convention Center  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
[www.csnf.com](http://www.csnf.com)

### October 20–21

#### Michigan International AlpacaFest

DeltaPlex Arena  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
[www.alpacafest.org](http://www.alpacafest.org)

### October 20–21

#### New York State Sheep & Wool Festival

The Dutchess County Fairgrounds  
Rhinebeck, New York  
[www.sheepandwool.com](http://www.sheepandwool.com)

### October 26–28

#### Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair

Western North Carolina Agricultural Center  
Fletcher, North Carolina  
[www.saffsite.org](http://www.saffsite.org)

### October 26–28

#### Vogue Knitting LIVE!

Palmer House Hilton Hotel  
Chicago, Illinois  
[www.vogueknittinglive.com](http://www.vogueknittinglive.com)

### October 27–28

#### Fiber Expo

Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
[www.fiberexpo.com](http://www.fiberexpo.com)

### November 1–4

#### Interweave Knitting Lab

Marriott San Mateo  
San Mateo, California  
[www.interweaveknittinglab.com](http://www.interweaveknittinglab.com)

### November 1–4 and 22–25

#### The Knitting and Stitching Show

- Royal Dublin Society (RDS)  
Dublin, Ireland
- Harrogate International Center  
Harrogate, North Yorkshire, U.K.  
[www.twistedthread.com/pages/exhibitions/viewExhibition.aspx?id=23](http://www.twistedthread.com/pages/exhibitions/viewExhibition.aspx?id=23)

### November 3–4

#### Fiber Festival of New England

Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds  
West Springfield, Massachusetts  
[www.thebig.com/ese/ESEEvents/Fiber\\_Festival.asp](http://www.thebig.com/ese/ESEEvents/Fiber_Festival.asp)

### November 8–11

#### Knitter's Review Fall Retreat

Inn on the Lake  
Canandaigua, New York  
[www.knittersreview.com/article\\_event.asp?article=/retreat.asp](http://www.knittersreview.com/article_event.asp?article=/retreat.asp)

### November 10–11

#### FiberMania

Josephine County Fairgrounds  
Grants Pass, Oregon  
[www.sojaa.com](http://www.sojaa.com)

### November 16–18

#### Green Mountain Fiber Festival

Wilder Center  
Wilder, Vermont  
[www.greenmountainfiberfestival.com](http://www.greenmountainfiberfestival.com)

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# Book Reviews

BY CHERYL KREMENTZ

## Knitmare on Elm Street

By Hannah Simpson  
Running Press; \$17  
ISBN: 0762444177

Knitting shouldn't be a terrifying prospect—unless you want it to be. In which case, cue the screechy music. Tricked out with Halloweeny treats, Simpson's horror homage scares up stitchy fun, with every-



thing from a haunted-house diorama with graveyard curb appeal to an intarsia creepy-clown pillow. You can't visit Elm Street without meeting Ferdy, a Freddy Krueger stand-in with striped shirt and knife-bladed glove. Eat out of a zombie brain eggcup. Incorporate electronics into your knitting with little light-up ghosts that utilize soft-circuited LEDs. There's an *Evil Dead*-inspired iPod cozy, a stuffed shrunken head in a jar and a disembodied kraken tentacle that could double as a neck pillow or an under-door chill chaser. A trio of witches stir up more than their share of toil and trouble, and a zombie marionette strikes any fearful pose you dream up. And because everything's woolly and warm, goose-bumps won't be a problem.

## Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Hat Book

Sixth & Spring Books; \$24.95  
ISBN: 1936096501

Hats are the crowning glory of cold-weather knitting. In the wake of its



popular compilation of shawls, *Vogue Knitting* offers up this collection of 50 of the most knittable top-pers to have appeared in its pages. Following a history of knitted hats and a hat anatomy lesson, basic shapes—the bowler, pillbox, toque, beanie, cloche and chullo—start things off stylishly. Highlights include Norah Gaughan's traveling cabled watch cap and Lipp Holmfeld's visored newsboy with a

hound's-tooth slip-stitch pattern. There's even a feathered fascinator to glam up a formal occasion. Most of the caps take only one or two skeins and stitch up quickly despite their complexity, making this a display book to entice a luxury-yarn purchase or to inspire knitters to stretch their skill sets.

## Heart Felt Knits

By Tamara Mello  
Chronicle Books; \$24.95  
ISBN: 145210252X

Yes, that's Christina Hendricks on the cover of this pleasant collection of simple felted knits. The *Mad Men* Emmy nominee and known knitter lends her star power to her friend and fellow knitting circle member's book, penning the foreword and modeling two pieces—a ruffled scarf and a blossom-adorned cloche the stylish Joan Holloway Harris might be tempted to don. Mello is an



actress, too; she learned to knit on the set of the cult TV show *Popular*, and she brings a stylist's eye to her felted accessories and décor, which she's been selling online under her own brand, Blackbird Design House. Wet felting, easily achieved by the newbies to which this book is geared, is her method of choice. You'll see nesting bowls, a circular

platter, a banded pencil holder, hardy coasters, a stuffed robot doll and the requisite knitting-needle roll, plus star and heart ornaments repurposed from felt scraps. Wearables and accessories include elfin baby booties, men's clogs, a leather-handled market tote, a lap-top messenger bag, concentric-circle barrettes and a cat-ear hat.

## The Knitter's Handy Book of Top-Down Sweaters

By Ann Budd  
Interweave Press; \$29.95  
ISBN: 1596684836

Budd's latest is a worthwhile successor to *The Knitter's Handy Book of Patterns* and *The Knitter's Handy Book of Sweater Patterns*. As in those previous volumes, the author handles the math, leaving the stitcher to make modifications to fit her own personal specs if need be. And by concentrating on top-down construction, Budd plays to the growing cadre of knitters who love stitching north/south in order to try things on as they go while avoiding seaming. Charts for children's, women's and men's sizes comprise at least half the book, providing the subtitle's promised "multiple sizes and gauges" in four chapters, each with three sweaters and and one A-list guest designer. "Seamless Yoke" features a flared feather-and-fan number with a concentric-ring yoke based on Elizabeth Zimmermann's EPS formula as well as Pam Allen's

chunky cropped Fair Isle sweater. "Raglan Shaping," with its telltale diagonal seams from neck to underarm, serves up A Twisted



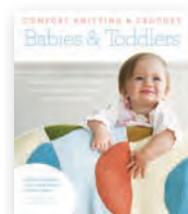
Little Raglan, yarn overs defining the seams, and Anne Hansen's lacy India Print Henley. "Set-In Sleeves"

allows for a bespoke fit and classic lines, including a brioche sweater with a shawl collar and a Fair Isle from Jared Flood. Finally, "Saddle Shoulder" plays up the ability to start a design element at the neck and extend it right down, with either cables or—as Véronik Avery uses in her zigzag intarsia cardi—corded ribs as a contrasting texture.

## Comfort Knitting & Crochet: Babies & Toddlers

By Norah Gaughan and the Berroco Design Team  
STC Craft; \$19.95  
ISBN: 1584799870

Kids' wear needs to be sturdy and, ideally, machine-washable. Gaughan and her colleagues at Berroco cover both in this good-looking book for bicrafty folk with little lambs to stitch for. Fifty patterns in all (25 knit, 25 crocheted, interspersed throughout) feature the brand's popular palette-spanning washables. Spot Gaughan's signatures (hexagonal motifs, for one) strewn here and there in patterns that range from cutesy (a tuxedo romper with ruffling down the front) to arty modern (a blanket with color-blocks that undulate like sound waves). Retro styles include the Ronald snowsuit with knit-in belt and elbow



and knee patches and the Jet Set sweater, which has an intarsia plane zooming across the back. A crocheted

hat can be adapted as a baseball cap for boys or a ruffled cloche for girls. Whether you wield a hook, a pair of needles or both, you'll find something to your little one's liking.

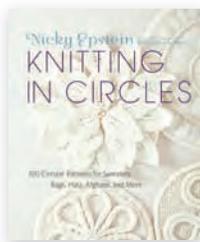
## The Biz Box

Craftpreneurs have two new reference books to help them get an artisanal business up and running. **Grow Your Own Handmade Business** (Storey; \$16.95; ISBN: 1603429891) is Kari Chapin's follow-up to *The Handmade Marketplace*. Written from an individual's perspective and packed with advice from been-there types like *Project Runway* winner Jay McCarroll, *Grow* delves into the "care and feeding of a business," everything from writing a business plan, profit and loss, and advertising, marketing and PR to just getting comfortable saying "no." **Handmade to Sell** (Potter Craft; \$16.99; ISBN: 030758710X) is the result of a collaboration among author Kelly Rand, cofounder of Hello Craft, and co-creators Christine Ernest, Sara Dick and Kimberly Dorn. It too covers nitty-gritty business topics—copyright, pricing, health insurance, online selling, meeting deadlines, setting up shop. Whether you're heading into a partnership or striking out on your own, both books are worthy reads.

## Knitting in Circles

By Nicky Epstein  
Potter Craft; \$29.99  
ISBN: 0307587061

After living on the edge and traveling from block to block, Epstein spins around in circles, turning her spheres of stitching into spheres of influence. A hefty instructional section describes how to ply no fewer than 101 imaginatively decorative circles—spoked, corkscrewed or radiating; embossed, striped, lacy or 3-D; scalloped, coiled, beaded or knotted. Twenty signature projects show you how to wheel those individual rounds into a cohesive garment, with measurements dependent on the size of your circles. Some, like the Hemisphere Shrug and Rotunda



Cape, rely on a single circle, albeit a large one. The Entrelac Capelet combines three rounds of interlocking floral circles in a rainbow of bright colors to cover the back and shoulders. The Big Blooms Capelet, with rosettes bursting out of the spirals, similarly uses a trio of Bold Petal Circles. The Eternity Dress, flounced prettily in back, stacks diaphanous lace circles to create the bodice and skirt—it's the perfect rehearsal-dinner dress for a knitter. Jackets, afghans, scarves, bags, even a pullover make up the rest of the 20-plus options.

## Crochet Noro

Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95  
ISBN: 193609648X

Sixth&Spring Books' third Noro-centric collection asks some of crochet's biggest names—Candi Jensen, Lily Chin, Robyn Chachula, Doris Chan, Linda Permann, Mary Beth Temple—to sink their hooks into the revered color-shifting Japanese yarn brand. Bearing out the theory that bead crochet is especially hot today are shell-stitch gauntlets that incorporate sewn-on pearls and a floral-motif shawl with beads interspersed among the lacy rosettes, both in Silk Garden Sock. Kureyon loops into a



puff-stitch shawl or felts up into a vibrant market tote. There's a stained-glass quality to the colorwork in Chachula's cashmere Strawberry Lace scarf and to Chan's V-stitch miniskirt with bobbles, stitched on the bias. Techniques such as short-row shaping, chevrons and modular pieces are incorporated in a subtle scarf, a zigzagging cap and a triangular cowl, respectively.

## One + One: Scarves, Shawls & Shrug

By Iris Schreier  
Lark Crafts; \$17.95  
ISBN: 1454701293

Any way you crunch the numbers, the math in the title of Schreier's latest book adds up to a smart way to move salable amounts of luxury yarn. The concept doubles up on the ever-popular one-ball trend, pairing two discrete skeins of yarn in a single garment. In this case, naturally, those skeins come from the Artyarns arsenal. The fiber coupling happens in several ways throughout this elegant collection. In some cases—a dramatic twinkling evening shawl, for instance—an embellished yarn is wed with its unblinded-out counterpart, lending just a soupçon of sparkle or shimmer. Other pieces play with different colors or tones of the same yarn, seen in a double-knit corrugated-rib scarf, an undulating-waves shawl and a triangle shawl,

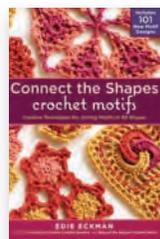


its deep chevrons separated by openwork. Elsewhere, two distinct fibers are combined to interesting effect: a Mohair Splash "channel" holds a long lace column of Silk Rhapsody Glitter in place; variegated Beaded Silk Light provides the stripes in a turtleneck collar of solid teal Silk Rhapsody. Patterns run the gamut of technical ability, and the contributors (Laura Zukaite and Brooke Nico, among them) are as starchy as much of the featured fabric.

## Connect the Shapes Crochet Motifs

By Edie Eckman  
Storey; \$19.95  
ISBN: 1603429735

In this engaging exploration of the myriad ways disparate crocheted motifs can be pieced together, Eckman reaches out to loopers who "dread the process of joining" individual elements, not to mention free-form acolytes always looking for new tricks. Leaving no shape unlinked, she shows the many ways granny



squares, triangles, snowflakes, rings, knots, florals and more can be attached to one another; plenty of charts, pictures and text let you decide which methods to use. Flat joins, slip-stitch joins, sewn joins, and single- and double-crochet joins are the most common, used along the motifs' sides, at corners, points or edges. JAYgo (join as you go) is a popular technique that gets its due, as does the "filler" stitching that acts as glue between several motifs. A pattern section demonstrates the versatility of motif crocheting, with projects ranging from a linen petal place mat and reversible rug to a lace skirt. Eckman's expertise is evident throughout, and her notes—including

one suggesting that lefties flip the book upside down or look at it in the mirror—are, as always, spot-on.

## Little Rascals

MillaMia; £14.95

Quality control is important to Katarina and Helena Rosen: The sisters behind the kids-first yarn company MillaMia do everything from palette picking to pattern writing with care. Eschewing the booklet format, they opt to publish full-fledged book collections that bear out their commitment to fun yet fashionable knits for babies and children. *Rascals* concentrates on kids ages 1 to 7 in response to knitters' requests for garments for older youngsters (though bambinos do get a snuggly sleep sack and an irresistible onesie with a kangaroo pocket dubbed a "Babygrow"). Girls who like their sugar and spice served up with style will flock to the Pia argyle and the Hannah cardi, with bows where buttons



would otherwise be. The boys' options are dressier, with stand-outs like the shawl-collared Magnum cabled cardigan and Carl, which merges details of a peacoat and a nautical sweater. A new, interesting skill

## Bestseller Box



Here's a snapshot of the stitchy bestsellers at the major online outlets for the week of July 29.

### Amazon.com Knitting & Crochet List

1. *Cast On, Bind Off*, by Lesley Ann Bestor (Storey)
6. *The Knitter's Handy Book of Top-Down Sweaters*, by Ann Budd (Interweave Press)
13. *Knit, Swirl*, by Sandra McIver (SeaStack Publishing)
18. *Circular Knitting Workshop*, by Margaret Radcliffe (Storey)
25. *Stitch Red*, by Laura Zander (Sixth&Spring Books)
26. *Beyond the Square Crochet Motifs*, by Edie Eckman (Storey)

### Barnes & Noble.com Knitting List

2. *The Principles of Knitting*, by June Hemmons Hiatt (Touchstone)
4. *Finishing School*, by Deborah Newton (Sixth&Spring Books)
9. *One + One: Scarves, Shawls & Shrug*, by Iris Schreier (Lark)

# Book Reviews

designation, “Improving,” is assumedly meant to spur knitters in the middle on to new heights.

## 100 Snowflakes to Crochet

By Caitlin Sainio

St. Martin's Griffin; \$21.99

ISBN: 125001333X

No two snowflakes are alike, of course, which makes this seasonal addition to the best-selling ornamental-crafts series a natural. The stitched flakes, shown actual size, are just right for decking the halls or adorning gift boxes. Derived from research of snowy weather events and

organized by level of difficulty, the individual entries—frosts and bursts, lacy and rosy, round and pointed—are starched or stiffened to maintain their symmetry. Instructions are given in both chart and written form, and brief text bursts explain the origin of the design. A final chapter gives project ideas for the crystalline pieces: Attach a slew of, say, Snow Moon flakes to construct a Blizzard Scarf, make a nursery mobile or embellish everything from throw pillows to mittens.

## Hand Spun

By Lexi Boeger

Quarry Books; \$24.99

ISBN: 1592537626

At the forefront of the hand-spun art-yarn movement, the author, of Plucky-fluff fame, has long reveled in her “black sheep” status, as she diverged from traditional expectations of



spinning. But over the years she's realized that in “looking back at its roots,” the black sheep

knows that “it's a sheep after all—it's only on the surface that it is anathema to the flock.” In other words, there's no right or wrong way to spin fiber, and everyone who partakes is intractably connected to its long tradition. The how-tos here are riveting: Learn how to crazy card

multiple colors, textures and materials into a unique thick-and-thin skein. Add in-line chains, beads, zippers, braids, even lengths of crochet as you go. Core-spin fluffy or wrapped yarn or sari silk. A “Permutations” gallery shows the breadth of imagination in the hand-spun community, also represented by profiles of spinners like Stephanie Gorin of Loop Fiber and of small fleece producers like Namaste Farms. The wide pattern selection is as eclectic as the rest of the book: a fleecy felted rug, a boa made from “ruined” fleece out of the washer, a finger-crochet table runner and coasters, even a fly-fishing fly. Boeger gives fellow spinners the final word in an inspiring appendix that expounds on the role the craft plays in their lives.

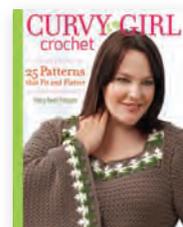
## Curvy Girl Crochet

By Mary Beth Temple

Taunton Press; \$22.95

ISBN: 1600854125

This book hooks into garments for ample crocheters, size 14 and up, with an emphasis placed on knowing



not only how to measure body parts properly but also on how to modify elements to suit an individual's

specific shape—as Temple points out repeatedly, just because two women share a size doesn't mean they're built the same way. *CGC* has three distinct chapters, with projects looped in LYS staples. “Pullovers, Tunics and Tank Tops” focuses on fine-gauge layering—a verdant pullover with a spike-stitched collar that draws the eye toward the face, a flared A-liner in double crochet, a tunic whose ombre effect slims optically. In “Cardigans, Coats and Jackets,” there's a two-toned wrap cardigan, a kimono-like striped jacket with a lacy button band, and the “rule-breaking” bulky-weight peacoat in a gauge and yarn not usually used for heavier frames. “Wraps, Bags and Accessories” includes Charles Voth's cashmere crescent wrap and a massive seven-hued felted carryall. *Curvy Girl* makes a big statement.

## French Girl Knits Accessories

By Kristene Griffin-Grimes

Interweave Press; \$21.95

ISBN: 1596684909

Griffin-Grimes—raised in Seattle, relocated to Languedoc—has a gift for infusing her designs with the *je ne sais quoi* that comes from living *la vie quotidienne*. In this culture, accessories help the effortlessly chic meet the wardrobe standards set by another French girl, Coco Chanel (“Fashion fades; style is eternal”). So *chapeaux et toques* head the collection, with entrées including a leafy lace head scarf, a chunky bohemian beret and an alpaca cap with a feathery brooch adapted from a design popular during the Revolution (theirs,



not ours). Fingerless gloves and socks include the dramatic Blanche-Neige (literally, Snow White), cabled up the

leg and tied with a ribbon at the back of an above-the-knee turn-down flounce; balletic slippers with a Mary Jane strap; and buttoned mitts with graphic black-and-white patterning reminiscent of classic Chanel. The chapter on shawls and wraps is highlighted by *Tattoo*, an alluring mélange of Shibui silk and Habu silk/steel, etched with an ostrich-plume motif. Add in a few details from a day in the life of a French stitcher, and this book speaks with an accent any yarn fan will understand.

## California Revival Knits

By Stephannie Tallent

Cooperative Press; \$26.95

ISBN: 1937513068

Tallent has an architectural eye and a penchant for California Revival houses—good thing, since she lives in a cozy coved-ceiling bungalow in Hermosa Beach. In this collection, she integrates design elements from the Mission, Spanish Colonial and Revival styles she loves into a variety of commanding knit garments and accessories. Bright tilework translates to vibrant colorwork motifs on mitts, cowls and pillows, including peacocks (for the bird found on many a

sculpted fountain) and Catalina stars (the compass-type bursts seen often in Deco design). Fringes under the intricately patterned cuff on a pair of socks call to mind Persian rugs thrown onto oak floors. Tilework is also evoked via beads on a seamless stockinette sweater, the baubles



mimicking Moroccan geometrics in Deco artwork. The wrought-iron gates so popular in the Golden State

show up as cables on a pullover, a beret, socks and mitts. The size range is all-inclusive, from XS to 3X, and the yarns used, big names and small—Bijou Basin, Shibui, Blue Sky Alpacas, Hazel Knits, Dragonfly Fibers, Stricken Smitten and Woolen Rabbit—fall into the artisanal category.

## Knit Socks for All Seasons

By Stephanie van der Linden

Trafalgar Square; \$24.95

ISBN: 157076526X

Cue the Vivaldi. This collection is organized around a simple premise: six pairs of socks are matched to each of the four seasons. In spring, you'll find crocus-bud lace intertwined with cables and twisted-cord cuffs



that resemble blossoming petals, all in spring-friendly fibers like bamboo and silk blends. In

summer, the florals continue with rose leaves and red-and-green wildflowers, plus starfish patterning taken from the seaside. Come fall, the author opts for earth hues rather than vivid foliage colors: filigree, intarsia blooms and trellises rely on bark browns and subdued greens. Finally, winter brings Fair Isle motifs and Nordic accents, plus patterning inspired by snowdrifts and yuletide poinsettias. The author overlays photos of the socks on a whimsical background, so the socked feet appear to be skipping through a field or frolicking at the beach. A pull-out booklet contains all the charts.



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YARN FORWARD

# DISCO *Fever*

By Christina Behnke

**L**ike the songstress who shares its name, **Adele** from **S. Charles Collezione/Tahki-Stacy Charles (#3)** (7 colors; 43% viscose, 28% polyester, 20% kid mohair, 9% polyamide; 169yds/50g) is much more than a flashy presence. Three strands—a sequin-studded metallic, a viscose and a kid mohair—are twined together with yet another strand of fine-weight metallic. That final strand helps to curb the usual splitting that happens when so many different fibers are strung together. (For an added dose of razzle-dazzle, the sequins appear in a rainbow range of colors within each skein.) Flaunting the best of both natural and synthetic worlds, the knitted fabric boasts the yummy touchability of a feather-soft mohair along with multidimensional glitter. Soft enough for headgear, it just begs to become a jaunty beret.

Industry standard Kidsilk Haze gives the glam life a try with **Rowan/Westminster Fibers' Kidsilk Haze Glamour (#6)** (8 colors; 60% mohair, 26% silk, 11% nylon, 3% polyester; 206yds/25g). This is the yarn of choice for knitters who want to stay abreast of knitwear trends but who aren't ready to give themselves over to all that glitters. Plied into a color-contrasting nylon/polyester strand, tiny paillettes appear only intermittently. Knit up, this contrast creates a beautifully heathered, drapey fabric; the sequins serve more to enrich the patina than to stand out on their own. Be sure to smooth this beauty as you knit: The nylon/polyester strand tends to knit up tightly, which can cause the silk/mohair strand to bunch—but also helps to anchor the sequins on the front of your work.

With **Cotton Supreme Sequins (#7)** (9 colors; 97% cotton, 3% polyester; 180yds/100g), **Universal Yarn** dresses up one of the softest cottons on the market for a night out, though this yarn is even better suited to daytime. Generously sized (and marvelously color-coordinated) sequins set off the base's slight sheen and halo; the resulting fabric looks less sequin-encrusted than inherently sparkly. The firm 4-ply strand begs to show off stitchwork—try it in a lacy cardigan or cabled raglan tee. Used in kids' garments, its sequins will appeal to little-girl sensibilities, while the soft and downright squishy cotton will put an end to any itchy complaints.

True adventurers in the sequin-knitting realm, look no further than **Knit Collage's Stargazer Silk & Sequins (#4)** (10 hand-dyed shades; 100% silk; 100–110yds/100g). Soft and lightweight, the loftily spun, variegated silk strand is given to the occasional nubby pill that picks off easily (though you may want to leave it for a more robust look). And as if hand-painted silk weren't enough, jumbo sequins of real brass are stranded right onto the yarn. Though they hug the strand firmly, the sequins can be slid along catch-free, making perfect placement easy. Knit up, they tend to hold themselves horizontally, straddling the space between right side and wrong; on openwork and drop-stitch patterns, they look like stacks of coins. Use it for anything for which you crave opulent drape. Dare we suggest a hip scarf for belly dancing?

Part of a family of kid-mohair blends, the base yarn of **Schulana/Skacel Collection's Kid-Paillettes (#5)** (9 colors; 42% kid mohair, 40% polyester, 18% silk; 137yds/25g) is mohair the way you've always hoped it could be: all the fluff and luster with a shed-free, next-to-skin-soft fabric. Tiny paillettes are scattered along the strand, creating a fabric with an understated glint rather than a bold sparkle. Not to be ignored, however, the polyester strand that carries them helps to amplify all the best qualities of the kid mohair and silk. Adding an extra note of shimmer and an uncommon crispness, the poly strand is

equal in weight to the mohair's silk core, which nearly doubles the overall weight of the yarn. The result? A surprisingly big-bodied mohair that can hold its own in full-size garments.

**Tilli Tomas's Disco Lights (#1)** (24 hand-painted shades; 100% spun silk with sequins; 225yds/100g) is as much about the knitting experience as it is about the final product. Thanks to the sumptuous hand that only spun silk can provide, the yarn slides fluidly through your fingers and knits up fast. The silk thread on which the sequins are generously stranded wraps tightly around the 1-ply silk as you knit, giving the yarn a corkscrew appearance and helping to avoid any splitting. For their part, the sequins give off an iridescent glow rather than sparkle, which complements the incandescent luster of each well-defined stitch. The resulting fabric in our swatch has the look of ice-crusting snow but holds up to wear surprisingly well.

In Chinese philosophy, yang is the active principle associated with light, so it's no accident that **South West Trading Company's Yang**

**(#9)** (20 shades; 60% wool, 20% silk, 20% rayon from bamboo wrapped with 100% silk with metallic sequins; 60yds/50g) acts as the sparkly counterpart to Yin, the same yarn without the sequined strand. (Even the color names of the two yarns complement one another: The corresponding plain strand of *Calm*, shown opposite, is *Quiet*.) Still, Yang stands on its own merits. Once you fall into a rhythm, the sequined silk chainette twists firmly enough around the delicate wool/silk/bamboo strand, acting as an additional, strengthening ply. The differing silk content in each strand creates mottled sheen that plays nicely off the holographic sequins. Knit up, it has great body; use it for garments requiring more structure than drape.

**Artyarns' Beaded Pearl and Sequins (#8)** (hundreds of colors; 100% silk; 80yds/50g) is practically dripping in metallic beads and mirrorlike sequins. The base is formed of Artyarns' innovative Silk Pearl, a silk chainette that maximizes durability (just try and get it to pill) yet retains the luminosity of spun silk. Coiling around it are two generous strands of silk thread—one strung with beads, the other with sequins—that together offer embellishment as often as every half-inch. The fabric emerges with a positively jewel-encrusted surface. Take a cue from recent runways and knit yourself an embellished Peter Pan collar. You'll be fielding the "Who are you wearing?" question soon enough.

A mermaid's tail? A dragonfly's wing? What do you see in **Great Adirondack Yarn Company's H.D. Sequins (#2)** (150-plus hand-dyed colors; 60% cotton, 40% PVC; 75yds)? Meant as a carry-along, this mercerized cotton chainette offers up a slick "wet" shine along with a crispness not often found with other yarns of this type. Ensnared in the chain are oversized sequins (at 5mm to the yarn's 1mm diameter) that give new meaning to the word spangled—hold it under a light, and it's easy to imagine fireworks. Held with another yarn, we expect that H.D. Sequins' seamless color changes and fiery sparkles would breathe new life into even the most basic of fibers. But seeing sparkles like this, we'd almost prefer to splurge on a couple hanks, get out our super-sharps and knit up a slinky shawllette befitting a mer-princess.

They say that ebullient fashions signify optimism for good times ahead—and if the spangly yarns we've been seeing are any indication, the yarn industry expects that we'll all soon be in the money. Novelties are on the rise again, and what better mate for string than sequins?



## Membership Evolves and Grows

As I walked the TNNA market floor in Columbus in June, I was struck by the diversity of our group membership. In aisle after aisle of decorated booths, I saw lots of familiar faces but was pleasantly surprised by how many new faces looked up to say hello. Our members come from all over the country—and the world—to experience and participate in the magic of a TNNA show. We are retailers, wholesalers, designers, publishers, manufacturers and teachers in the fields of knitting, crochet, cross-stitch, needlepoint, embroidery and, thanks to our recent expansion, spinning and weaving. I was awed as I thought about how we've been able to successfully evolve and grow as an association while serving all of these categories and segment groups.

The energy was palpable at our Friday night "NeedleArts and All That Jazz," when we hosted the largest Sample It! event ever, allowing retailers to try out new products from wholesalers, and the Needlepoint Showcase, during which needlepoint designers displayed their new

finished pieces and teachers held meet-and-greets. One of my favorite parts of the night was the awards presentation. The TEN Award was presented to Stacy Charles of Tahki•Stacy Charles Inc. for his many years of service to our industry. Who better to receive it? The second-annual Business Innovation Awards were presented by TNNA and Hart Business Research to four outstanding companies [see the yarn-manufacturing winner profile on page 34]. All the applicants for the awards were outstanding. Looking out into the audience, I felt so proud to be a representative of this trade association.

At our latest board meeting, we discussed our goals and how best to achieve them. Membership is, of course, our top priority: To keep the industry alive and growing, we must always be adding new members. With that in mind, we revised our TNNA member guidelines to include an affiliate membership category for industry educators that allows needlearts teachers, museum educators and organizations affiliated with the needlearts industry to join our association. We've also developed the structure for a Provisional Badge,

available to potential new shop owners, which will allow them to visit the show before becoming fully fledged association members—a one-time opportunity to walk the TNNA show floor (with special conditions attached). TNNA will be actively reaching out in every way possible to promote the value of membership and is likewise always striving to make membership more valuable. As TNNA Marketing and Membership Committee Chair Dale Lenci states, "TNNA membership is the best thing you can do to ensure the success of your business."

Please take a look at our website ([www.TNNA.org](http://www.TNNA.org)) to read the new guidelines to see if you qualify. We would like active members to speak out about the value of TNNA and how it has impacted your businesses. For the needlearts industry to be successful, our association must continually grow and evolve.

TNNA, founded in 1974, is a professional organization representing wholesalers, manufacturers, distributors, designers, publishers and other companies supporting the needlearts industry. For more information, visit [ttna.org](http://ttna.org) or call (800) 889-8662.

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- Industry Recognition
- Professional Development Series
- Access and Participation in Industry Business Survey



## Creating New Knitters & Crocheters

**E**ducation has always been a mandate of the Craft Yarn Council, and these teaching investments are paying off for the industry in a number of ways, including the fact that more knitters and crocheters mean more sales for all the stores that sell craft supplies.

Recruiting new stitchers is a cornerstone of CYC's mission. Shortly after the Council was formed in 1981, members designed the Certified Instructors Program (CIP) to help current knitters and crocheters strengthen their technical skills and learn how to teach those skills to others. We wrote about the program in the May 2012 issue of *Yarn Market News*, and we hope that it inspired you to seek certification or find instructors who have participated in CIP. We've been able to keep program fees low by securing a commitment from our students to give back with 15 to 30 hours of teaching of their own. As a result, each CIP graduate has taught dozens of

additional people to knit or crochet, creating a pyramid effect as those students go on to teach others our age-old crafts.

The Craft Yarn Council has been working with CIP graduates and students to reintroduce knitting and crochet classes to Michaels stores in the U.S. and Canada. With more than 1,000 stores in North America, Michaels is poised to spread the crafts to tens of thousands. In 2011, the first full year of the program, more than 20,000 students attended Michaels' knit and crochet classes. We expect that number to double by the end of this year. Another positive effect of this educational initiative is that it has provided jobs to more than 1,000 CIP teachers across the country.

In 2009, CYC teamed up with Scholastic, Inc., the global media giant, to place free knitting kits in the hands of 40,000 junior high and high school students. Many of the schools that received the kits started clubs and also held knitting sessions for grammar school child-

ren. Teachers who did not receive the kits were still able to create their own classes through access to free online lesson plans and projects. The one-time program was well received, and we are eager to repeat the experience.

This fall, CYC members will be teaming up with Jo-Ann Fabrics & Crafts Stores to again reach out to teens across the country. We plan to create another 40,000 free kits, but this time the focus will be on crochet.

All of our programs—including I Love Yarn Day, held this year on October 12—show our strong commitment to cultivating a new generation of knitters and crocheters. To celebrate our crafts with stitchers old and new, please visit [www.ILoveYarnDay.org](http://www.ILoveYarnDay.org). We'd love to hear about the events you planned to mark this special day.

The Craft Yarn Council was formed in 1981 to raise awareness about fibers. Visit [www.craftyarnCouncil.com](http://www.craftyarnCouncil.com) or [www.knitandcrochet.com](http://www.knitandcrochet.com) for more information.

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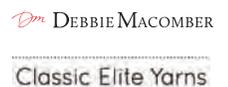
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# Checks and Balances

Yes, many LYSes still take checks. Learn how not to get fleeced if one bounces.

BY CATHY RUMFELT

**D**oes anyone carry cash anymore? Credit and debit cards have irrevocably changed the way we pay, making checkout easier, faster and more reliable. But there are shoppers who still insist on writing paper checks to purchase everything from groceries to yarn. Accepting checks is a convenience to those who prefer that form of payment, but it can be a great inconvenience to shop owners. It also opens your yarn shop to plenty of hassle if even one of those checks bounces, in the form of money lost and time spent trying to get it back.

Certainly, you can choose not to accept checks, which is how Rare Purls in Duluth, Georgia, operates. “When someone pulls out a checkbook, we refer her to the sign by the register stating that we do not accept that form of payment and ask for either a credit or debit card or cash,” says Kay Mather, the shop’s resident knitting expert. “In my memory, this has never cost us a sale.”

For vendors like independent dyer Natasha Laity Snyder of Unplanned Peacock Studio, however, accepting checks is a necessity: “Since I work shows, I feel as though I have to take checks, even though most of my customers pay in cash or by credit card. I don’t want to miss even a single sale.” The question is, how can you protect yourself from the occasional bounce?

## Tender Mercies

Stores that receive many checks can subscribe to services that quickly deposit and, simultaneously, avoid bad checks. “Most merchant service providers offer a method of transitioning a traditional check to an electronic debit, allowing the check to clear instantly, much like a debit card transaction,” says Cory Wilson, vice president of the Bank of North Georgia. In addition, certain services can verify checks prior to acceptance. Many banks and outside companies also provide a check-recovery service for merchants: The bank will attempt to collect the amount of the check, for a percentage of that amount as its fee, after it has come back for non-payment several times. These services can also hold checks and submit them on a traditional pay date, thus increasing the likelihood of collection. Of course, these services cost money, generally \$20–\$30 a month, with additional transaction charges.

If you choose to take checks, post your policy prominently by your checkout area. This policy should explicitly state your guidelines, including any fees a customer will incur should available funds be insufficient, and which personal data you require on the check—phone number, address and valid driver’s license being the most relevant.

Knowing your customers and how to reach them can help curb any would-be fraud. April Cordell, owner of Fleece in Cumming, Georgia, keeps a customer database including names, addresses and phone numbers for all purchases. “If a regular customer wants to write a check, I can easily retrieve her contact information from my database if I need it.” (Cordell also asks for the customer’s driver’s license number when a check is proffered.)

Pat Kirtland, owner of the Yarn Barn in Dillwyn, Virginia, has a similar advantage: “My store is located in a small community where everyone knows everyone. Most of my customers want to continue shopping in my store, so if one writes a bad check, she’ll take care of things.”

If you are in a larger community or one where you draw many clients from out of town, keeping in touch with other LYSOs can help prevent fraud. Recently in Portland, Oregon, the same person bounced checks in several yarn shops. “Owners who had received a bad check compared notes, and it helped get the police to realize there was a problem worth investigating,” recalls Cindy Abernethy of Pearl Fiber Arts. “Fortunately, the person made good on most of the bad checks or returned the merchandise to the store owners.”

## Persistence Pays Off

If you accept a bad check, know your state laws; statutes vary. For example, in Georgia, the statute for bad checks allows the merchant to charge an additional \$30 or 5 percent of the check amount, but written notification of the returned check and fee must be sent to the check writer. When Fleece’s April Cordell received a bad check, she contacted the local magistrate directly. “He told me to make contact and then send a certified letter,” she says. “If that didn’t work, I could take the customer to court.” Repeated attempts at

contacting the customer failed, so rather than start an expensive legal battle, Cordell visited the credit union from which the check was issued and was able to recoup her money once funds were available in the customer’s account.

Because visiting the bank where the account is held isn’t always possible, direct contact with the customer is a good first step if a check does bounce. Customers are often embarrassed and want to fix the error right away. Pat Kirtland, who has been in business for more than 40 years, agrees that the majority of bad checks are just mistakes: “Most of the time it’s an honest error, and people call me when they find out—even before I know about it. Everyone makes a mistake now and then.”

## The Bounced-Check List

**Bad check? Here’s how you can recoup your money:**

- **Wait.** Most of the time, the bank will attempt to redeposit the check immediately after it is returned, according to Cory Wilson of the Bank of North Georgia. If the insufficiency is an honest mistake, the issue may be quickly resolved.
- **Make contact.** Start with a phone call to the customer, then send a letter (certified, if required in your state).
- **Know the law.** “If you don’t get a response from a letter, that lack of response constitutes proof of intent to defraud for purposes of a criminal action,” says Atlanta-based attorney Kasey Libby. “Intentionally writing a bad check can be a felony or a misdemeanor, depending on the amount of the check.” (The amounts for a felony or misdemeanor vary by state.) Research your state statutes so you know how to proceed, though be prepared for a long effort. Many local police stations have bad-check units that can help.

Cathy Rumfelt is a writer living in Atlanta. She accepts checks but prefers PayPal.

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# Make Friends With Free Patterns

Your customers love them. Learn how to use free patterns properly to leverage sales in your shop.

BY AMY R. SINGER

**E**ver wonder precisely how popular free patterns have become? According to Google AdWords, an average of 368,000 Internet searchers type in the term “free knitting patterns” every month. That’s a lot of knitters looking for a free lunch. As a yarn shop owner who trades in patterns and books, you might consider this stat detrimental to your bottom line. Don’t free patterns compete with what you’re selling?

Not necessarily. Katey Walker of Ramshambles in York, England, believes “access to free patterns is a great tool for my business. The patterns are a nice carrot to tempt people into making a yarn purchase, especially new knitters who aren’t that confident [in their skills].”

Be aware, though, that there is a cost to using free patterns: Shop owners still have to abide by copyright rules, so when terms of use are supplied, do as they say. When they’re not supplied, advises Jenna Wilson, an attorney with the Toronto firm Dimock Stratton who specializes in intellectual property law, ask permission from the source before making copies for customers.

## A Case Study

Garnstudio.com, home to DROPS Design, is a prolific supplier of free patterns—4,361 are currently available in English. An LYS-friendly notice at the bottom of each pattern page reads: “As a store, you are welcome to use the DROPS pattern database to promote the sale of your assortment. Print out any pattern you may want, make as many copies as desired. The only thing we ask is that you don’t make any changes/additions to the original printed document...and that the patterns, according to the DROPS philosophy, are given out to consumers for free.”

The key point: Don’t sell this thing that we gave you for free. Fair enough. Notice, too, the phrase “don’t make any changes/additions to the original printed document.” But what if you don’t carry DROPS yarn in your LYS? Nothing in DROPS’s terms prohibits you from using its free pattern to sell another brand of yarn. Says Denny McMillan, longtime employee at Lettuce Knit in Toronto, “I’m in that yarn store to sell

the products that the shop owner bought. As a yarn store employee, you have to know how to substitute.” But if you were to figure out the substitution for a fiber you have in abundance and then paste that—or your shop’s logo—into the pattern document? Not kosher. Being respectful of the pattern source means not wiping out the original DROPS yarn requirements on the pattern copies you distribute. Maybe the pattern mention will spur a knitter to seek out DROPS yarn for her next project.

Most often, you’ll find the phrase “all rights reserved” within the pattern’s terms. Says Jenna Wilson, “Copyright law gives copyright owners a bundle of exclusive rights, including the right to make copies and distribute them, whether for a fee or free. Users—which include retailers—may not do these things without receiving permission from the copyright owner. ‘All rights reserved’ is a shorthand way for the copyright owner to say that none of these permissions is being automatically granted.” So for you to give a copy to a customer, or kit one up, you need to get permission from the copyright owner first. Asking for (and ensuring you obtain) permission for your intended use is a good habit to get into, and one that ensures that your LYS maintains a positive relationship with free-pattern publishers and designers.

At Knitty.com, all of our patterns are free. All we ask is that the knitter print her own copy. LYSOs ask, “Can’t I print just one copy for a special customer?” Please don’t. Each time a knitter sees a pattern at Knitty, she’s also viewing ads that pay the magazine’s cost of production, plus a link to the designer’s other, profit-driving work.

## Trusting the Source

Knitty’s patterns are professionally edited, but not all gratis patterns are as stringently checked. A little research and Ravelry reading can keep you abreast of which free-pattern sources are dependable enough for you to comfortably recommend them to customers. “We caution folks that free patterns on Ravelry can be unreliable, but the stats that show how many users have knit a pattern are a pretty good indication of clear instructions,” says Lynne Sosnowski of Shall We Knit? in Waterloo, Ontario.

“When we’re pointing people to resources, we keep business cards on hand that have web addresses for Knitty.com, Ravelry.com and Knittinghelp.com on the reverse side.”

Kathy Elkins of Webs in Northampton, Massachusetts, concludes with this perspective on free patterns: “We are not going to make our retirement selling patterns, so I don’t feel the freebies are a terrible detriment. If one inspires a yarn purchase, it’s done its job as well as a pattern that came with a price tag.”

Amy R. Singer is the editor of the online knitting magazine Knitty.com, which is proudly celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

## Free and Easy

Aimee Pelletier of Darn Knit Anyway in Stillwater, Minnesota, has an efficient way of helping her customers obtain copies of free patterns: “We have tear-off tags on each of our samples that note the name of the pattern, supply requirements and the source. For customers who aren’t computer-savvy, we have a shop computer designated for pattern searches. When customers are educated about how easy it is to get a free pattern online, they can do it at home with ease.”

Verity Britton of Baa Ram Ewe in Leeds, England, takes this approach: “We often use free patterns to encourage customers to try out a luxury yarn at the top of their price range. Showing someone a free pattern that needs just one hank of an expensive silk lace yarn may motivate them to give it a whirl; they may hold back if they have to pay for a pattern too.”

“Getting people to try new yarns in this way has been a real success for us, and we often get samples of free patterns knit up, display them in the store and photograph them to go online. We e-mail the pattern link to customers to give the designer more traffic, more chance of customers seeing other designs, and therefore supporting them in some small way, even if they are not charging for a particular pattern.”

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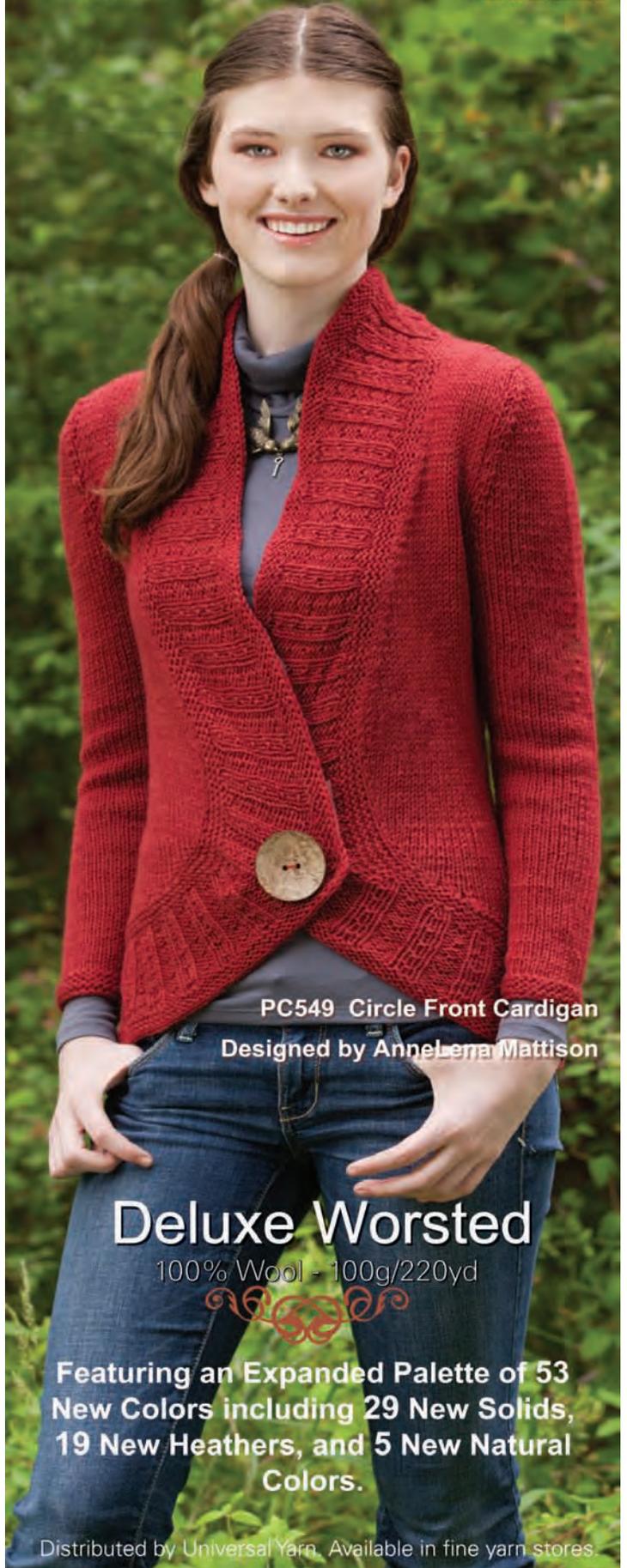
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# Present Perfect

Give the gift of easy gift giving to make the holidays less stressful for your customers and you.

BY JACQUELINE SAVA

**M**ost retailers have a simple pair of objectives to guide their businesses through the holiday season: Keep time-crunched shoppers happy and keep cash flowing. While regulars will continue to knit and shop to their usual rhythm, a new breed of customer will come through your door as the holidays approach. They are the gift givers. They may be knitters, they may outright claim their non-knitter status or they may be somewhere in between. In all three cases, making gift shopping efficient and easy for them is of utmost importance. Here are a few ideas to ensure that the upcoming busy season is indeed the most wonderful time of the year.

## All Tied Up With a Bow

In the cosmetics industry, the “gift set” is the holy grail of holiday revenue. Wise yarn retailers seek out the few finished sets that exist (Louet and Polarknit are two that provide them) and supplement by creating their own. [Editor’s note: Be sure to avoid violating copyright when building your own kits; see Amy Singer’s article on page 26 for more.] Successful gift sets revolve around pricing. As most shoppers enter your store with a budget in mind, be prepared with gift sets in several price ranges, from the inexpensive, targeted to knitters’ friends and co-workers, to a more robust price point for parents and significant others.

Assemble a group of handy notions in a decorative bag or box in the \$10–\$15 price range. This gift is suited to multiple purchases: for members of a knitting group, as stocking stuffers or to accompany a gift certificate. While gift certificates are simple and tried-and-true, try up-selling them with smaller items so they have a bit more substance. Create examples of gift sets in the \$20–\$40 range to facilitate spontaneous yet meaningful purchases. Combine project bags, needles and a skein or two, or create a more elaborate set that includes notions and a hot new book.

Research indicates that \$50 is the sweet spot for holiday gift budgets, which is why our Soak-boxes retail at this price. The boxes include some of our top-selling products, yarn from Lorna’s Laces and a Fiona Ellis fingerless-glove pattern along with a color-coordinated bottle of nail

polish, all packaged in a beautiful, compact box.

Lynne Sosnowski, manager at Shall We Knit? in Waterloo, Ontario, kept to the \$50 range when she put together a festive, unique color-work kit. (She believes that multicolored projects lend themselves especially well to kits because only small amounts of a color are required.) To the frustration of many a retailer, perfectly good patterns often sit abandoned because the cost of purchasing all the supplies individually can be prohibitive. Sosnowski solved this problem for one pattern by creating a custom Popsicle Socks by Spud & Chloë kit that retails for \$49.95, far below the project cost if each color were to be purchased as a full skein. After knitting a sample to determine yarn amounts, she wound off the yardage needed (plus 10 percent to account for tension differences) in each color and packaged the mini-skeins with the pattern. Sales at Shall We Knit? indicate that knitters who fall in love with a project will make the leap and take it home. For the holidays, these kits can be wrapped and given as is, or knit up so that the finished object itself is the gift.

## Gift Station Creation

Jennifer Campbell, co-owner of The Purple Purl in Toronto, creates a special display area each holiday season exclusively for gift sets, stocking stuffers and other easy-knit ideas. She says it “takes the mind work out of it for the buyer.” Frazzled shoppers need a place to relax and focus when they come in the shop during the busy holiday season. Leading up to December, Campbell writes a series of newsletters identifying holiday “round-up” ideas. Each newsletter has a calculated cross-section of gift ideas for beginner to experienced stitchers, priced from low to high. “As the holidays approach, the project ideas get smaller and the yarn gets thicker,” she admits.

The Purple Purl also hosts special knit nights during the month of December. Knitters sign up in advance and pay a nominal fee in exchange for a discount during class time. Campbell explains: “It’s essentially an open studio, filled with attainable holiday knitting ideas. We bring in two teachers and help knitters work on

projects of their choice, designed to be completed for holiday gift giving. This special time gives knitters a place away from home to work on secret projects and allows for dedicated knitting time during an otherwise hectic time of the year.” Make gift giving easy for your customers and reap the rewards.

Jacqueline Sava is the founder, owner and Director of Possibilities at Soak Wash Inc.

## Ten tips for a successful gift-giving season:

- Dedicate a wall or area in the shop for gift sets, stocking stuffers and other easy sale items.
- Present a range of gift ideas for the full spectrum of shoppers, from experienced knitters down to first-time customers who may be looking for beginner gifts or shopping for the knitter in their lives.
- Offer gift sets at a variety of price points, from \$10 to \$50 and higher.
- Knitters socialize with knitters. Create gift ideas that can be purchased in multiples for knitting group friends and as stocking stuffers.
- Look to suppliers for already assembled gift sets in a variety of price ranges.
- Source boxes, bags or other packaging from your local packing-supply shop to create custom gift sets in your shop.
- Choose one form of packaging (a signature ribbon or tissue-paper color, box or bag) and use it consistently throughout the season, making life easy for your staff.
- Present gift set ideas in a variety of colors, so that when someone comes in shopping for gifts, you can easily guide them through ideas and concepts.
- Look around your shop. Use this busy season to shuffle merchandise and kit up items that might otherwise not be moving well.
- Bring on the holiday cheer in your attitude and interactions with staff and customers. Happy staff means happy customers; happy customers like to shop.

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# The Firing Line

Sometimes letting an employee go is the best thing for both of you.

BY LAURA POSEY

Let's face it: Only Donald Trump seems to take pleasure in firing people. In real life, firing an employee isn't any fun for a business owner, and it certainly isn't fun for the staffer. But like writing off inventory that just doesn't sell, termination of employment can be a necessary part of maintaining a healthy business. The good news is that by understanding the process on a professional rather than an emotional level, you can take some of the pain out of having to do the deed—and even take steps to prevent having to do so in the future.

To start, look at firing for what it really is: letting go of someone who's not a good fit for your company. Whether they don't share your work ethic or your belief that the money in the cash register belongs solely to you, certain employees just don't belong in your store. When you choose to let them go, you are benefiting them as much as you—after all, you are giving them the chance to find a place where they belong. By doing so, you are also making your shop a better place for your customers.

## The Documented Process

Successfully firing an employee starts long before you actually have the "This isn't working" conversation. Be sure to document poor behavior as it happens: Doing so will not only help you in the event that the terminated employee decides to take legal action; it also helps you initiate the firing conversation, since the precipitating details have already been spelled out.

At the first sign that an employee is not living up to your standards, discuss your displeasure with her in depth. Write down a summary of your discussion and have the employee sign the summary, indicating that she understands your concerns and will make an effort to change her behavior. Taking this step lets the employee know that you are paying attention, and that not meeting your standards has consequences; often, this action is the only discipline you will need to mete out. But if the offending behavior doesn't change, let your employee know in no uncertain terms that the consequences for her continued actions will be termination. Typically, employers offer staffers three chances to get it right, which means that on the second offense you should warn your staffer that a third misdemeanor will result in dismissal.

If, after documenting the offenses properly, you see no immediate improvement, it's time to have the firing conversation. Have documentation of the offending behavior ready; you don't want this talk to come as a surprise. Write out what you will say—explaining that you have set standards the employee has chosen to ignore, and that she is therefore not a good fit for your company—and practice in front of a mirror or with a friend. When you are face to face with the employee, don't get rattled by her reaction or be steered off-topic, and don't go into extraneous detail to justify your decision.

Above all, be polite and professional. Give her an opportunity to respond to your allegations and then to leave with dignity. Treating the employee respectfully can help you in the future. Remember, employees know many of your customers and could easily damage your reputation if they feel they have been mistreated, even if you are fully in the right. Also, former employees are possible future customers, and you want them to feel comfortable coming back to your store.

## Phasing Out

If someone on your staff isn't meeting expectations but you haven't documented the issues, or if you just can't stomach the firing conversation, another approach is to drastically cut that staffer's hours to see if she will leave on her own. This is a favorite ploy of Bobbi Krebs, owner of Amazing Threads in Maple Grove, Minnesota, who has "used this strategy many times," she says. "I let them know that I'm cutting their hours because I need those hours for employees who are selling, as they impact the bottom line of the store most."

## The Quick Fire

Once in a while, you may need to fire someone immediately; these cases usually involve egregious behavior such as theft or exhibiting inappropriate behavior in front of a customer or coworker. If this happens, escort the employee to a private space and have the talk as soon as possible, preferably after you've had a chance to cool down. Never fire in the heat of the moment, and never do it in front of customers or other staffers. Have a clear head when you make your firing decision. You can soften the blow by offering to pay the person for the rest of her scheduled time up to two weeks or even to the end of the month.

## An Ounce of Prevention

Trust your instincts and don't give in to outside pressure when making decisions about a new hire. If you want a salesperson, don't hire someone who comes into your store each week to knit. She likely will continue that behavior rather than sell like you want her to.

Of course, the easiest way to prevent having to fire an employee is to prepare your new hires for that possibility from the outset. One tactic that Krebs uses is the "30-day mutual evaluation." She lets each new employee know that the first thirty days are a time for both of them to decide if the staffer is a good fit for the job. This allows her to terminate employment at the end of the first month with fewer difficulties. "The quicker you let someone who is a poor fit go, the better off you are," says Krebs.

## Having the Conversation

While we may have a structure in mind for how to break up with someone ("It's not you, it's me"), not many of us have much experience initiating the firing talk. How should you go about it? Here's a sample conversation to get you started.

"Susie, as you know from our past conversations, we have a difference of opinion on how to [insert behavior in question here]. We have addressed this issue on [dates of discussions] and you agreed to change your behavior to suit the way we do things in our store.

"Unfortunately, I have not seen the necessary changes. As we discussed last time, continuing to do [the offending behavior] would result in you no longer working here. I noticed [the behavior] continuing on [date]. It appears that we have not been able to agree on a way to change [the behavior], so I'm going to have to let you go."

Let her respond, then repeat your decision, but do not give in to "one more try." Be firm but polite. After she's gathered her belongings, walk her to the door and see her out.

Laura Posey is Chief Instigator at Dancing Elephants and a past speaker at the YMN Smart Business Conference. She is a whiz at running small businesses but struggles with keeping her (Continental-style) stitches loose enough.

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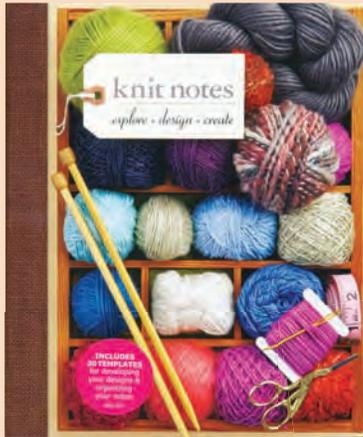
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# Uruguay

Home to some of the world's most year-worthy yarns

BY LESLIE PETROVSKI

In 1968, five women banded together in South America's second-smallest country to help rural women translate their knitting and spinning skills into sustainable incomes. The resulting company, Manos del Uruguay—now a member of the World Fair Trade Organization—has since grown to support 350 knitters, weavers, spinners, leatherworkers and dyers in 17 cooperatives who export their handcrafted goods all over the world and have worked with designers including Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan and Marc Jacobs.

"When Manos started, Uruguay was experiencing the same kind of urbanization problems that were happening all over the world," explains Lisa Myers, owner of both Fairmount Fibers, the U.S. distributor of Manos del Uruguay yarns, and Rosie's Yarn Cellar in Philadelphia. "People would leave their homes and networks and go to the city and try to make a better living, but they didn't have many skills and there just weren't that many opportunities."

Uruguay has been described as South America's most European country. With a population largely composed of people of European descent (the CIA World Factbook states that almost 90 percent of Uruguayans are Caucasian), the country has a modern Continental vibe. The skyline mixes urban skyscrapers with historical colonial and neoclassical buildings. The populace is highly educated and the government is very progressive; it was the first in South America to legalize civil unions for gay couples and has never criminalized marijuana.

Uruguay is also known for the beauty of its land, including its famous beaches, spread out along more than 400 miles of coastline. Rich rolling ranch land provides a home for the livestock, mainly cows and sheep, so important to the Uruguayan economy.

Uruguay is one of the top five wool exporters in the world, though much of the Corriedale, Australian merino and Polwarth produced here ends up on foreign shores in the form of wool top (clean, combed fiber that's ready for spinning). The same is true of Uruguayan yarn. Though Manos, Malabrigo and other producers ship thousands of pounds of gorgeous artisanal yarns to the United States and Europe every year, very little remains in the country, in part because of the cost and in part because Uruguay's recreational needlework scene is just beginning to gel.

The fiber arts, though always part of the culture in this heart-shaped nation, ebbed as more women entered the work force. "Until recently, like in most other places, knitting was associated with older women because people mostly saw their grandmothers knit, or that's the memory they relate to," explains Veronica Oliveira, a Uruguayan writer who handles much of Malabrigo's social media. "Over the last few years, though, more and more people, young and old, have been picking up needles and starting to enjoy this craft, getting together to knit, share experiences and learn together. I think the Internet has been a great help in making this happen."

Cecilia Lalanne, who works in design and product development at Manos in Montevideo, agrees that the grandmotherly stereotype associated with yarn crafts is changing. "In the past, let's say 30 years ago, it was much more



The faces of some of the talented women working at the Dragon, Fraile Muerto and Río Branco cooperatives supported by Manos del Uruguay.

common," she explains. "People would knit for themselves or their children from designs they saw in magazines. But as low-priced garments became widely available and women had less free time, knitting became an only-for-grannies craft. But a new approach to knitting is beginning to take shape, one more related to relaxing, devoting time to oneself and doing things yourself. The number of people knitting is slowly rising, and the craft is becoming increasingly cooler and more fashionable."

In Uruguay, yarn shops are relatively rare. Knitters and crocheters can buy yarn in outdoor markets and in the *mercerías*—a traditional type of shop that Malena Mendioroz of Abuelita Yarns describes as carrying everything from yarn and fabrics to notions and sewing-machine parts. During the cooler months, cheaper acrylic yarns can be found in supermarkets.

As knitting and crochet have grown more popular, hip yarn shops have started cropping up in the capital city. Mundolana (roughly "world of yarn") is an ultramodern chain of stores with three locations in Montevideo (the flag-

ship store even offers Wi-Fi and a café), with yarns that run the gamut from plain wool to pompom. Balitex Lanias, a yarn company with three shop locations, carries a range of wool yarns that include lofty single plies, striated worsteds and a super-bulky thick-and-thin, along with *hilados acrílicos* and *hilados fantasía* (acrylic and novelty yarns).

Like Argentine knitters, *los tejedores* in Uruguay knit with long straight needles, one tucked under an armpit for stability and speed. There is also a growing "stitch and bitch" movement in which knitters and crocheters gather to chat and ply their crafts.

For four years, Veronica Oliveira has been part of a knitting group in the capital city that meets each week to work on projects and knit for charity. "Some of us get together every Friday in a mall and knit in public," she says, "and once a month we spend a whole day together sharing our craft, learning and enjoying each other's company at one of our members' houses."

For design inspiration, Uruguayan stitchers typically look to patterns on the Internet, in yarn company publications and from neighboring Argentina, where knitting-pattern magazines such as *El Arte de Tejer* are produced. Popular projects include winter items—hats, scarves and arm warmers—along with togs for babies and kids. Shawls are also popular.

"There still doesn't exist a 'famous knitting culture' in this area," Abuelita's Malena Mendioroz explains. "Uruguay has many talented designers, but they are used to being hidden behind the name of the company for which they work. That is why we have Animate a Tejer [a fiber-arts competition with prizes, including a trip to Brazil, classes and yarn]. We have been holding it for three years, and it has one main goal: to showcase designers. Still, this is a difficult task: Uruguayans continue to be very shy."

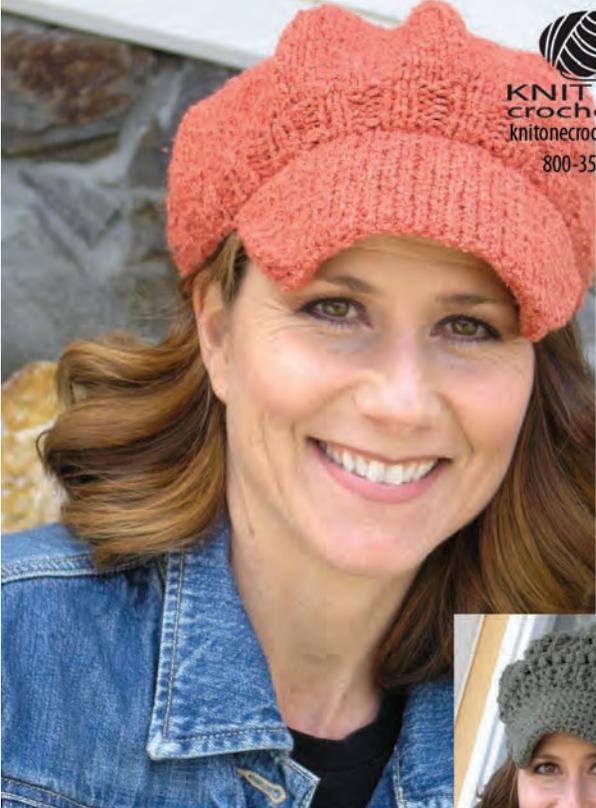


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# Shibui Knits

## Portland, Oregon

BY DARYL BROWER

**S**leek, sophisticated fibers and clean, elegant design are the hallmarks of Shibui Knits, the Portland-based yarn supplier that's been pushing the boundaries of hand-knit style since 2007. Its knit pieces and luxury yarns embody an architectural aesthetic: "Simple but beautiful clothing is our mission," says owner Darcy Cameron.

Shibui (the name means "elegant with a touch of bitterness" in Japanese) grew out of Knit Purl, Cameron's successful Portland yarn shop. "When you own a retail store, you see the holes in the market," she says to explain her entry into the world of yarn manufacturing. "So we thought, Why not fill that hole?" What Cameron believed to be missing at the time Shibui launched was an abundance of hand-dyed fibers. Sourcing from Peru, she began selling a collection of richly colored hand-paints, adding solids and more and more luxury fibers to the mix as the yarn business grew. Early on, the company handled dyeing in-house, but now all of it is done at mills in Italy, Japan and Peru. "It's just more efficient that way," says Cameron.

The hand-paints sold well, but Cameron quickly found another niche to fill. "The original yarns were beautiful and the designs were great, but personally, we [Cameron and her design and marketing team] just weren't that enthusiastic about them," she says. "They weren't the things we wanted to wear." So Shibui quickly changed gears, tapping into a more on-trend color palette and a more product-oriented approach to creating yarns. The knitterly quality of the hand-paints was phased out in favor of a more up-end, sleek, modern look that's become the company's signature style. "We became more fashion-oriented as a company," Cameron explains.

Everything from logo and label design to pattern photography is carefully styled and merchandised to create a cohesive package. "We put a lot of thought into how we design a ball band or style a pattern sheet," Cameron says. "Presentation is as important as the product." Instead of reacting to the market, the Shibui team looks ahead, creating a new demand. The designers and merchandisers come up with a look and a mood together, then develop fibers and patterns that will bring that feeling within reach of knitters. "We're developing

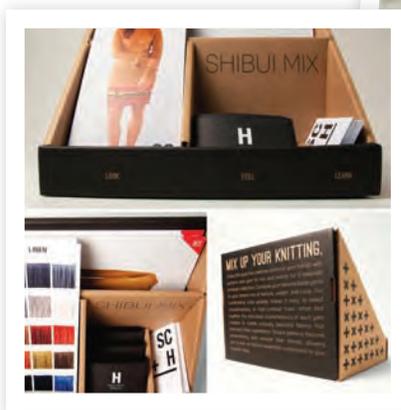
products based on what we like, not on what's selling in the current [yarn] market," says Cameron.

Personal preference isn't the only reason for this approach. "If you take the temperature of the market and use that as your standard, you'll end up with a product that bores customers," Cameron says. "We're OK with being edgy. It's good to push people a little outside their comfort zone. They may not like [the product] the first time they see it, but by the second time, they're coming around—and by the third, they love it."

And love it they do—so much so that the yarn company has seen 100 percent growth in the past year. Shibui was the 2012 recipient of TNNA's Business Innovation Award, an honor earned through the introduction in 2011 of a clever point-of-sale display dubbed the Mix Box. The kit, a sort of recipe box for knitters, is an embodiment of Shibui's sensibility. Attractively designed and packed with a look book, color cards, yarn samples and a set of flash cards, it stimulates both sales and creativity by showing customers how various base yarns in the collection can be combined for a variety of multi-stranded looks, and then provides patterns to put the yarns to use. The flash cards, modeled on grade school addition facts, feature symbols for each yarn on the front and an image of what the two yarns can create on the back. Three months after the program launched, sales had already exceeded yearly projections. "The Mix Box is a great support for retailers," says Cameron. "Stores are having mix classes, mix parties—it's easy to make it into an event." Customers are equally enthusiastic. "People have fun playing with different ingredients and seeing what comes of them," Cameron states.

She believes that running a retail store along with the yarn company has put her in a unique position to support Shibui's wholesale customers. "We're better able to understand the needs of our [wholesale] customers because [as retailers] we are facing the same issues," she says. "We also use our retail store to experiment with ways to help our wholesale customers merchandise Shibui to increase their sales."

Cameron manages 16 employees who are each assigned to one of the three groups:



e-commerce, bricks and mortar, and wholesale. Managers for each division report directly to Cameron. "They have full responsibility for running their group," Cameron says. "When you have smart, capable people, it isn't that hard to manage two different businesses." She's quick to point out that the retail store receives no special favors. "The store places orders with Shibui just like everyone else, and its PO is put into the queue in the order it was received," Cameron explains. "We want to support, not compete with, our wholesale customers."

In a market that's been a little less than robust, concepts that are a little out of the ordinary are a helpful selling tool. The trick, says Cameron, is to not be afraid to be bold. "The market gets soft and [retailers] get scared and retrench," she observes. "They stick to what they've always done, afraid to follow their instincts and try something new. And we don't think that's the right way to go." So the Shibui team sticks to its core values, turning out yarns that look lovely and feel luxurious, supporting them with patterns that let the knitters create. "We trust ourselves to do good work," says Cameron. "And if we keep making beautiful things and provide the support and tools to use them, they'll sell."

### Snapshot

#### Shibui Knits, LLC

1500 NW 18th, Suite 110  
Portland, OR 97209  
www.shibuiknits.com  
(503) 595-5898

**Years in business:** 5

**Staff:** 5

**Square footage:** 1,200



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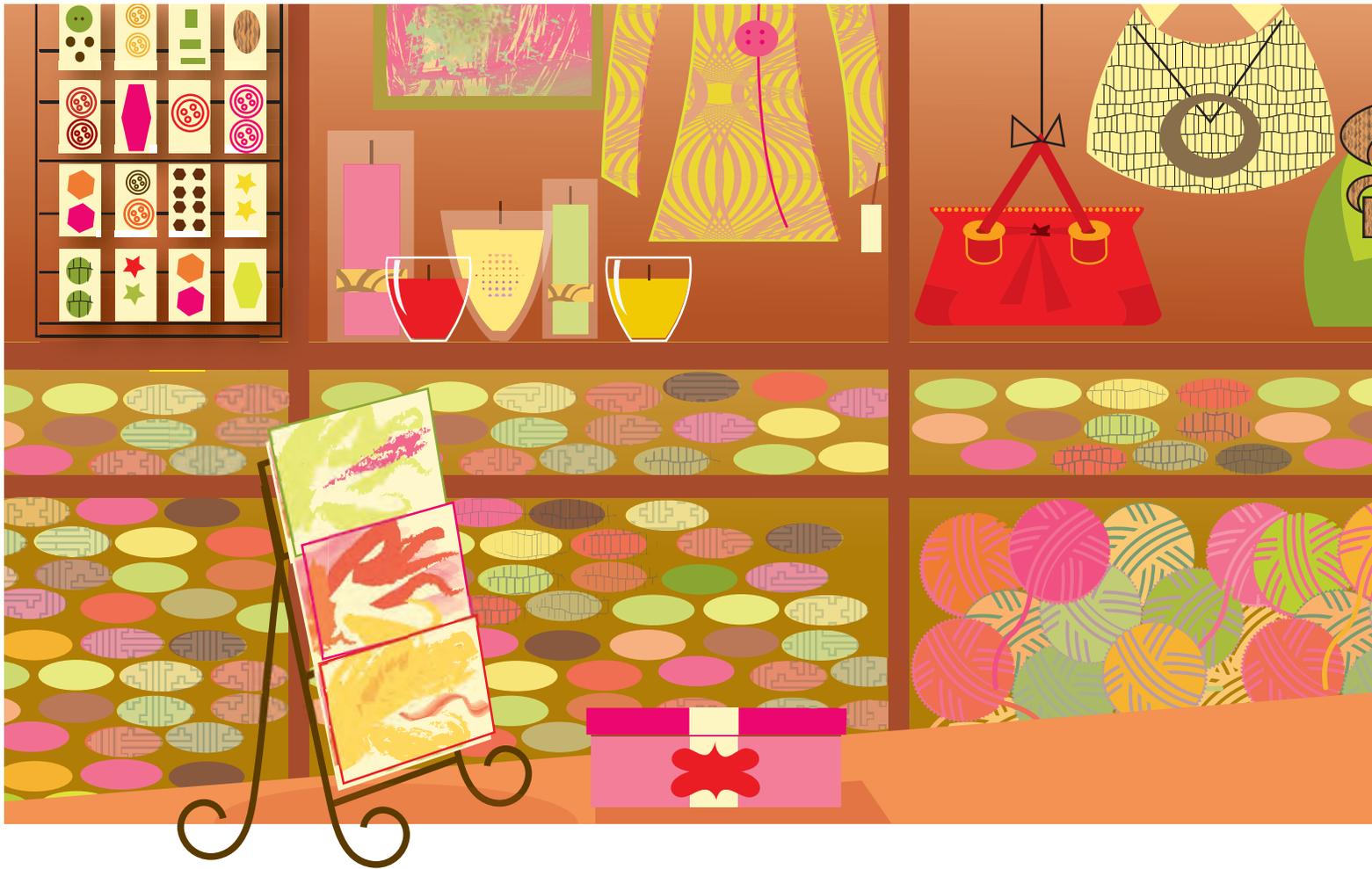


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# Consignment Alignment

Looking for a low-risk way to expand your inventory? Consignment sales may be the answer.

BY DARYL BROWER

Consignment—that tried-and-true model of providing a seller with a spot on your shelves and splitting the money made on the sale—isn't just about used clothing. For a growing number of retailers, especially those with limited budgets, taking on small quantities of artisanal yarn, knitting notions, bags and other items for a cut of the profits can be a smart and fulfilling way to do business.

For Chris Krauss of Fuzzy Wuzzy Yarns in Arlington Heights, Illinois, selling on consignment was always part of the business plan. "The idea of selling different types of items appealed to me," she says. "This is a way to try them out without having to make a big investment up front."

Krauss took on her first consignor before opening the shop. "The person who sold me my [display] tables makes pure silver jewelry, and she asked me if I would sell her stuff," she explains. Intrigued, Krauss commissioned silver buttons—a shop exclusive—as well as stitch markers and a few earrings. The workmanship was good, the vendor reasonable to work with and the items sold well and, most importantly, were for a nice fit with the rest of Fuzzy Wuzzy's inventory.

Krauss's second consignment arrangement proved to be a practical way to "test-drive" items before committing to wholesale orders for them. Approached by another artist who was making ceramic yarn bowls, Krauss was torn. "[The bowls] were lovely, but I didn't know how they would sell," she says. "I didn't want to commit my inventory-to-buy dollars to something I wasn't sure would move." So Krauss offered to take a few bowls on consignment, hoping to better judge their customer appeal before ordering. "They sold out in two weeks," she says, "and I had customers begging for special orders." Confident she had a winner on her hands, Krauss purchased subsequent shipments wholesale—and continues to do so. "Every [wholesale purchase] has sold out in less than a week," she says, noting that the original arrangement was a great way to dip her feet into a new category.

ILLUSTRATION BY LISA HENDER LING



## Consign, Seal, Deliver

Not all items are as well made, though. Concerns about workmanship and quality prompt Mary Penxa, owner of Two Rivers Yarns in Brunswick, Maryland, to advise fellow shop owners to talk things through with the consignor before agreeing to take on a product. When she bought her store, she inherited 30 consignment contracts and immediately whittled the list down to 14. “The finished goods were a mixed bag,” she explains. “Some of them didn’t reflect well on the shop, so I discontinued them.” She’s since dropped all but a very few consignment items. “Having a good level of input from the consignor is important to making the relationship work,” Penxa says. “Is she going to be part of the process of selling her items? Will she work with you to set a reasonable price and replenish stock when the items sell out? Is she willing to adjust her inventory to meet customer demand and just generally be available to consult?”

A consignor who isn’t willing to take these steps may be more trouble than the product is worth. Penxa admits “the paperwork involved was taking too much of my time,” but the more pressing reason for eliminating consignment had to do with the consignors themselves. “Two [yarn producers] took all my suggestions about knitting up samples of their yarn, creating nice kits and packaging their yarns attractively,” she says. “As a result, they were my most successful sellers. The rest just took up space on my shelves—space that I now dedicate to wholesale yarns I can actually move.”

Concerns about quality and suitability for her shop make Chris Krauss wary of selling yarn on consignment; she’s seen mixed results when she has taken on consigned skeins. A lot sold on consignment for an Etsy seller who decided she was no longer going to dye yarn was a success (“All of it went in less than a month,” Krauss reports), but other forays into con-

signed yarn were not as successful. “I had yarn from a spinner and hand-dyer that didn’t do well because her quantities were not enough to complete a project. I returned it to her and told her she needs to have at least enough to make a hat, scarf or mitts in the skein before I can take it on again.” Another hand-dyer was dropped because the colors—while beautiful to look at—weren’t set properly and bled. “I lost a very good customer over the issue,” she says. “I’ve since insisted that the color needs to be set with vinegar or some other means or I will not buy or sell it.”

Consignors who put little effort into promoting their wares also flummox Penxa. “Most of my yarn consignors never step foot into my shop except to dump yarns on me once or twice a year,” she says. “They weren’t interested in helping me market or promote the yarn. Two of them refused to take my gentle hints that their yarns were too expensive for my customers, which, of course, resulted in very few sales. With so little input and cooperation from my consignors, and so little return, it didn’t seem worth it to me to lend out valuable real estate on my shelves.”

John Valleau of The Fibre Garden in Jordan, Ontario, has also decided to curtail consignment, mainly for lack of space. Since the spinning store’s opening day, he has carried “wild and crazy” novelty hand-spuns on consignment. “The turnover wasn’t great,” he says of the consigned skeins, “and I badly need the racks to hang my own hand-dyed stuff in our tiny shop.” Valleau is quick to point out that his decision to drop consignment was more a matter of the fit, not an issue with quality or convenience. “If people start asking for [the novelties], we may bring them back,” he says.

## The Costs of Consignment

Mary Penxa lets the consignor set each item’s price, then takes 35 percent for the shop, cutting checks on a quarterly basis, an arrangement that is

fairly standard. “A typical split is 70/30,” says Chris Krauss, who usually works out specific terms with each vendor. “If their desired terms are not agreeable to me, I will negotiate. If we can’t reach an agreement, I won’t sell their stuff,” she says, noting that she’s helped newbie vendors out with their pricing. “I know what my customers are willing to pay,” she says.

John Valleau takes a similar approach. “I’ve heard of others doing 60/40 or even 80/20, but we’ve found that the 70/30 consignment arrangement works fairly well,” he says. He lets the consignors set the selling prices for the items. “When the artists set the retail prices themselves, they feel they are being paid for their time,” he says. “We try to report sales quarterly and notify them about which skeins have sold. The bookkeeping part of consignment is a bit of a headache, but I’ve managed to work it out so that every time a skein sells, it goes in my master consignment sales list for each month.”

At Knot Another Hat in Hood River, Oregon, Sarah Keller’s consignor contract stipulates the agreed-on selling price, the commission percentage for each item and that the items will display for 90 days. “After 90 days it is at my discretion to continue to display or not,” Keller says. The contract also stipulates that Keller assumes liability for theft or damage of the yarn while it’s displayed in her shop. Consignors are paid every 30 days. “I run a sales report for their items and send them a copy along with their check,” she says. “All told, it’s worked really well.”

At Yarn Story in Honolulu, Hawaii, owner Kim Langley’s terms for the locally produced yarn and roving she carries on behalf of local producers are a little more fluid. “I don’t do a formal written contract, just an e-mail that explains the pricing and the payment schedule,” she says. “In Hawaii, this is considered a very formal agreement,” she says, laughing, but it’s not a practice she recommends for everyone. “When I began my shop, I obtained yarn from an existing store. I left with boxes of yarn and [the owner’s] trust that I would send her a check.” For Mainlanders, Langley suggests paying a little more attention to detail. “Have a written agreement—especially for items for which the quality of the production may be an issue.” In other words, add a clause that explains what will happen if the quality of the items delivered to the store is not up to par. Can you refuse to carry said items? Renegotiate pricing?

Langley allows consignors to set their own prices and then adds 10 percent to that price (which she keeps for herself) before she sets items out on her shelves. It’s not a high-profit arrangement, but “I want to support local producers,” she says. “Consignment sales allow me to do that at a price point that encourages sales. If I were to use the usual terms [marking up an item two or three times over the wholesale price], the product would be less competitive with Mainland product.” She cuts checks at the beginning of the month for what sold the

previous month. “It requires me to be on top of sales and keep my accounting up to date, but I think it’s worth it.”

## Shelf Life

Before taking on a consignment item, those who’ve been there suggest thinking hard about what your recourse will be if the item doesn’t sell well—or at all. Since consignment items aren’t owned by the shop owner, merchandising methods may require a little more forethought than that of your average commercially purchased yarn. Work with the consignor to come up with a price point that’s realistic for your customer base and, if needed, make suggestions as to how he or she can better present the product. “Swatches, attractive labels and kits go a long way,” says Chris Krauss. Also consider signage that showcases that the items are locally made and anything else that sets them apart from the rest of the merchandise in your shop. Is the artist willing to spend an afternoon or evening in the shop meeting and greeting customers and demonstrating the product? All these tactics can help boost sales and benefit both parties.

Even with these efforts it’s possible that a consignment item simply won’t sell. Relegating a slow-moving purchase to a sale bin may not be an option if the consignor isn’t willing to take a cut in price or if the store owner is loath to accept a smaller percentage to cover the discount. Special promotions are another consideration—will consignment items be excluded from the store’s yearly blowout sale, loyalty card program or other promotions?

As with everything in consignment, John Valleau says it’s best to be up front with the supplier. “Talk about sale policies,” he suggests. “If you have a sale, will the dyer or spinner take a cut in their portion of the price? My consignment people say no, so we exclude their products from any promotions or sales.” Mary Penxa does the same. “Consignment items are not included in sales or special offers unless the consignor okays it in advance,” she says.

As mentioned earlier, Sarah Keller keeps products for 90 days—if they haven’t sold, she can pull them from the shelves and return them to the supplier. The arrangement allows her to hold onto products she thinks will be worthwhile in the long run and cut loose from those that just don’t work out. Kim Langley also limits the length of time she’ll hold on to consignment pieces. “I put a time frame for how long [a product] can be on the shelf before it goes in a sale basket, at a price we’ve agreed upon earlier, or is removed by the producer,” she says. “Put it in the contract so everything is out in the open.”

There are challenges to the consignment model, but for the most part the stores that have experimented with this approach are pleased with the results. Says John Valleau, “Consignment can work—especially for a start-up shop that can’t afford to put a lot of money into inventory purchasing.”

## Getting the Goods

Thinking about consignment? Here are some LYS-friendly products to consider.

**Yarn:** Small batches of artisanal hand-dyes and hand-spuns from local spinners and dyers are a natural for consignment. Just be sure to work out quantity and quality issues beforehand. Swatch and launder yarns to see how they work up and make sure your supplier can provide sufficient quantities to complete projects.

**Bags and needle cases:** Handcrafted holders for knitting supplies make perfect sense, but again pay close attention to quality. Seams should be smooth and sturdy, fabrics durable and the design something special.

**Stitch markers and other notions:** Beaded stitch markers, customized needles and other attractive tools take up limited space and provide a reasonably risk-free way to provide your customers with little luxuries.

**Jewelry and shawl pins:** Pretty accessories make sense when merchandised with sweater models. Think of them as props with a purpose.

**Gift items:** Novelties like lamb-shaped soaps, knitterly mugs and other not-so-necessary pieces with a fiber theme can find a happy home base in a yarn store, but take care not to go overboard. You don’t want to send a mixed message about what you’re selling.

Selling **paintings, prints and photographs** can serve a dual purpose—decoration for you walls, exposure for the artist and a bit of cash for both of you. Just make sure the images fit the mood of your store.



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# Charity

## Begins at Home

Doing good locally not only makes you feel good; it's good business. To mark the official season of giving, we celebrate the community-oriented LYS charity drive.

By Cheryl Krementz

The warmth inherent in the act of knitting is all but contagious. Upon hearing that others are sick or sad, displaced or deployed, in need or in limbo, knitters tend to turn on instinct to their needles, lending a hand by stitching up gifts meant to console, commiserate and convey tender care. But the worthy causes to which one can devote sticks and string are so numerous, it can be daunting for stitchers to decide where to direct their efforts. To help personalize the proceedings, many LYS owners offer their customers the opportunity to get involved by spearheading shop charity drives geared to their own communities. Not only does this allow knitters to feel good about doing good locally; it gives them the warm fuzzies about their LYS and enmeshes the shop further into the fabric of the neighborhood.

"As yarn shop owners, we cater to people who need hugs," says Joan Sheridan, owner of Heritage Spinning & Weaving in Lake Orion, Michigan, and cofounder of Knit Michigan, a massive fiber-based effort to support cancer patients and their families. Touched by the stories customers shared about the ways cancer affected their lives, Sheridan and a fellow yarn-shop owner, Bridget Dean of Have You Any Wool in nearby Berkley, banded together to run the inaugural Knit Michigan back in February 2007. Now as then, the annual daylong event raises funds via an admissions fee, raffles and knitting classes, with teachers volunteering their time and all proceeds going to a number of prominent cancer centers in the state. "The first year we would have been happy to make \$5,000," Sheridan recalls. "We ended up raising more than \$15,000."

Subsequently, Knit Michigan has contributed \$125,000-plus to its five main affiliates and distributed more than 5,000 chemo caps, infusion-room blankets, mastectomy hug pillows and knit teddy bears to cancer centers statewide. Placing the effort squarely in the Wolverine State was what Sheridan intended when naming the cause.

"Knit Michigan' was easy to say and representative of our state," says Sheridan. "Everyone wants to help their friends and neighbors." The money, she stresses, is used not for research but to help patients and their families in any way the centers that distribute the funds deem fit: "If patients need a utility bill paid or a taxi to the hospital, the money is



**These tiny toppers for Calvin's Hats were collected by Vivian Zagar at her LYS, Tangled Purls in Salem, Oregon. They are intended to help grieving mothers cope with the loss of a newborn.**

there. It feels good to give back and help people deal with something they have no control over."

Seven years on, Knit Michigan is well established, with a volunteer board of directors and 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. But from the beginning, it's been a personal endeavor for Sheridan. She has been through the cancer cycle, "from diagnosis through hospice," with members of her shop's extended family. "We all know more about cancer than we ever wanted," she says.

Indeed, when a member of a shop community is diagnosed with a disease, an LYS owner is often spurred into action. After an employee learned she had lymphoma, Stewart Allen of the Yarn Lounge in Richmond, Virginia, put together a shop team to participate in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's annual Light the Night walk, raising \$2,500. And in response to a customer's breast cancer diagnosis at age 38, Allen enlisted the help of Jennie Gee, creator of the "Keep Calm and Carry Yarn" project bags, to come up with a pink project bag with a graphic stating "The Yarn Lounge Cares"; Gee donated her design, and net proceeds from sales of the bag benefit the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation.

At the Knitting Nest in Weyauwega, Wisconsin, owner Catherine Martin honored the memory of her friend Gayle—who had helped Martin develop her business plan and died of breast cancer shortly after the shop opened—in a particularly personal way. Gayle's husband bequeathed Gayle's own yarn stash to the Knitting Nest to be used for a chemo-cap drive. "That one was really rough," Martin says. "Gayle was so invested in our community; she volunteered with the local garden, she delivered meals to seniors, and she and I had talked about doing community charity knitting projects. We wanted other knitters to experience what Gayle did a lot of—doing for other people."

That women's health issues like breast cancer remain a heavy focus of yarn-shop charity drives is no surprise.

Knitted Knockers, the effort to stitch knitted "breasts" for women who have undergone mastectomies—a softer, more wearable substitution for expensive bra-insert silicone devices—has been so successful for Tempe Yarn & Fiber in Tempe, Arizona, because, says Fred Neal, co-owner with his wife Terri, "90 percent of our customers are women." Since the Neals picked

up the Knitted Knockers banner two years ago from shuttered Knitting Experience Cafe in Brunswick, Maine, the Tempe Yarn community has distributed more than 1,000 knitted inserts to the local Chandler Regional Medical Cancer Center. Neal has created a dedicated website ([knittedknockers.info](http://knittedknockers.info)) with free Knockers patterns (also translated into Spanish), refined based on wearers' input; has hired a part-timer whose sole job is to expand the cause country- and world-wide (there are Knockers programs in England and Germany); and has sponsored a team for November's Susan G. Komen 3-Day Walk for the Cure in Phoenix. The effort, Neal says, "has brought a lot of joy to a lot of people, who've been able to vent some of their grief and anger in talking to us. It's a really moving experience."

### Rallying the Troops

Health-related causes are a mainstay of LYS charitable efforts; the military is another. In 2009, Carole Kosanovich of Nautical Yarns in Ludington, Michigan, was contacted by a military-liaison organization that requested 500 hand-made comfort blankets for the children of about-to-be-deployed Michigan National Guard members. Deadline: six weeks. Kosanovich put the word out, and the viral response was, she says, "remarkable": She received blankets from as far away as Arizona, Texas and California; Nautical Yarns distributed more than 150 kits filled with yarn donated by Plymouth and Berroco. Six weeks later, 644 blankets were distributed to National Guard families. "We were amazed at how many came in," Kosanovich says. "We didn't think we'd get 500. But when knitters heard that these children would be missing their moms or dads for a year, it was, 'Sure, I'll knit a blanket.'"

Rouses Point, New York, was once the site of a military base, and as such is home to many veterans. Kiersten Brown, who is preparing a mid-October opening for The Knotty Celt there, is already planning two drives: one for the two closest neonatal intensive care units (her own son was a preemie) and another for the local veterans' hospital. "We made it a point to make [charity] a part of our business plan and even budgeted our inventory to account for a donation bin of yarn," she says. Brown's husband is a veteran, so "we want to help other veterans afford to knit or know how it feels to get a nice knit or crocheted item from someone who cares." Once the store opens, vets will receive a 10 percent discount, and free classes for veterans will be offered, as knitting is used as occupational therapy to help with post-traumatic stress disorder. Brown already has a waiting list for classes.

Yarn Sellar owner Carrie McKie learned of the Combat Knitters through a regular customer of her York, Maine, LYS whose husband was serving as a commanding officer at the Kandahar Air Force Hospital in Afghanistan. The rotating group of soldiers based at the Kandahar Hospital pass their time off-duty by stitching. McKie reached out to one of the group's members, Lieutenant Commander Jennifer Almy, to gain permission to turn the KAF Role 3 Combat Knitters logo Almy had created into a patch. The Yarn Sellar has since become the exclusive source for the patch, proceeds from which now support the purchasing of goods for military personnel recuperating at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and their families. Immediate necessities—sweat-



**Knitted Knockers has been such a bonanza of a cause at Tempe Yarn & Fiber, co-owner Fred Neal created a dedicated logo and website for the ongoing effort, which provides women who have undergone mastectomies with comfortable knitted "breasts."**

shirts and pull-on items for triaged soldiers who've lost limbs, for example—have since given way to smaller but no less craved-for items like "body lotion, snacks, crackers and other random amenities that aren't provided by the military," says McKie.

The fact that this particular drive is based on knitting but not on collecting knitted items appeals to McKie. "I appreciate the different take," she says. "Sometimes I need to get out of the knitting element. Not only knitters want the patch, and it's nice to know that knitting is the common thread even though it's not on the surface."

Allison Worthing also conducts a non-knitting charity drive at Kitschy Stitch in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. She had originally planned on collecting knit toys to give to the children staying at a local shelter for families fleeing domestic abuse. "I called the shelter and they were honest, saying, 'That's nice, but what we can really use are sheets,'" says Worthing. "I'd rather help them with what they need than knit a bunch of things that might be tossed aside." So she's put out a donation bin for sheets and also diapers, onesies and arts-and-crafts supplies, and she's keeping it out through December, so that visitors to her tourist town will have plenty of time to contribute. Worthing entices peo-

ple to participate by allowing anyone who drops an item into the bin to take an envelope containing a discount coupon good at the store but, she says, many contributors do not avail themselves of the opportunity.

Knowing that some knitters are more apt to stitch for charity while others prefer to write a check, Robyn Schragar and Brooke Nico of Kirkwood Knittery in St. Louis offer multiple charitable options to their customers, none of which necessitates a purchase. In the past, Kirkwood has joined the other shops in its strip mall—from a salon to the neighboring gun shop—to mount a collaborative fashion show benefiting Operation Food Search; attendees could kick in a monetary donation or bring nonperishable food, and customers' knit designs were modeled, with patterns and yarns for the garments available for purchase. Knitters were able to get in the stitching action when Kirkwood partnered with a local TV station and STLmoms.com to auction a sock-yarn baby blanket for the local Learning Disabilities Association; tutorials and updates were broadcast on-air and online, and more than 250 knitters came in to contribute a few stitches over a three-month period. The afghan fetched \$500 for the charity.

In addition to these types of inventive drives, Kirkwood also supplies yarn for the knitting curriculum at the local Waldorf School, holds a biannual silent auction of shop samples to benefit an employee-selected charity (next up, the Open Door Animal Sanctuary), then matches the amount raised from customers, as has the yarn company Knitting Fever in years past, essentially quadrupling the take. When customers donate financially, they write the check directly to the charitable organization, so they take the deduction directly come tax time. Kirkwood also keeps a donation vase on its cash wrap in case shoppers want to drop a few bucks in on a whim. "It's great when customers understand that their somewhat expensive hobby has ramifications outside their own immediate gratification," says Schragar.

## Rebuilding, Stitch by Stitch

LYS owners needn't shy away from charities dealing with sad or depressing situations for fear of putting off potential contributors. After all, no matter how you spin it, at the center of every charitable effort is a tragedy. Charity knitters put needles to yarn in the hope that their output can be a restorative act.

Calvin's Hats provides minuscule knitted hats to parents who've suffered an unspeakable loss: the death of a newborn shortly after delivery. Started by a grieving mother in West Salem, Oregon, who wanted a tangible memory of the child she'd never take home from the hospital, the concept touched Vivian Zagar, who adopted the cause for her LYS, Salem's Tangled Purls. The endeavor, she says, "has just exploded. We have ladies who bring in 50 hats at a time; they're given to neonatal departments by the hundreds." The hats, some as small as a thimble, have created "more of a ministry going out of the shop," Zagar says. "We get requests from people who lost a baby years ago and have nothing to remember the baby by. It's tear-jerking, but we know it's helped people with the grieving process."

Knitting can also help redress wrongs done by Mother Nature. On Labor Day 2011, during the terrible wildfires blazing through central Texas, Susan Fricks was evacuated from her home and forced to stay at Yarnorama, the LYS she owns in Paige, Texas. "A few days into it, a couple came to the door," she recalls. "I explained that we were closed due to the fires and evacuations, but the man said he was hoping to just get a small project for his wife to work on as they were in a small hotel room, having lost literally everything in the fires except what they were wearing and their vehicle. Of course, we got her set up."

This encounter kicked Fricks into action, starting Phoenix Rising with support from other area retailers. On Ravelry and Facebook, she asked knitters to donate a favored yarn from their own stash, along with "a note of hope from a fellow fiber person."

To accompany the handmade washcloths she also requested, a local soapmaker donated special soaps for evacuees living in shelters. "I was hoping for a couple hundred small packages," Fricks says. "Within a week, large SUVs and trucks were pulling up loaded with donations. The results were overwhelming. We received more than 500 washcloths and 5,000 skeins of yarn, hundreds of needles, tools, crochet hooks, books, patterns, bags, spinning fiber, spindles, spinning wheels, and all kinds of looms, including a nearly brand-new Baby Wolf. And it was an incredibly cathartic experience: The fire victims felt the love of their fiber

community, and those who felt helpless watching the devastation happen were able to do something and contribute in a most positive way." [See "Knitting Drives for Natural Disasters" below for Fricks's advice on conducting a similar effort.]

## Good Works, Good Business

Sponsoring charity drives shows that you're a kind, concerned member of your community. But you're also a businessperson. And the somewhat crass, commercial reality is that charitable efforts can draw customers into your shop. "Grateful Waldorf parents always thank us in person

when they visit the shop; we know that our program of giving to the school leads them first to our store when they shop for yarn and supplies," says Kirkwood Knittery's Robyn Schrage. "We know [our charity drives] pay off, both in good will and in dollars."

At the Knitting Nest, Catherine Martin's homage to her friend Gayle caught the attention of a local newspaper; the resulting story "absolutely helped make people aware of the shop," Martin says. "Between that and the blog and social media, it really worked out nicely. Once Gayle's friends were involved, they told their friends, and the word of mouth became a big deal. People came in for yarn or patterns, saying, 'I heard you were doing chemo caps.'"

Carrie McKie has been wary of "tooting her own horn" when it comes to advertising the Yarn Sellar's involvement as the exclusive source of Combat Knitters patches. "I'm sure there are ways to make it more lucrative and use the patch to spread word about the shop." The effort, she says, "is a means to an end, just not straightaway." The true reward, she says, was receiving a folded flag and certificate from a commanding officer in Afghanistan for her involvement with Combat Knitters. "It was so unexpected. I was awed by it."

Over at Tempe Yarn, Knitted Knockers, says Fred Neal, is "good for our business. And even if it weren't, it's good for the

community." The buzzy program has garnered tons of publicity via local newspaper articles and numerous TV-news spots. "We've had people who didn't know we existed come to the store because they read the articles or saw the stories on TV," he explains. "A bond is built because of this cause."

That bond is both emotional and visible—one entire wall of Tempe Fibers is covered with thank-you notes from Knockers recipients. "We reached out and helped them when they were in need," says Neal, "and we know they'll be coming back for years."

## Knitting Drives for Natural Disasters

**Susan Fricks, owner of Yarnorama in Paige, Texas, founded Phoenix Rising to support evacuees of last fall's Texas wildfires through yarn and knitted washcloths. She shares her tips for yarn shop owners who may find themselves taking on a charitable drive in the wake of a natural disaster.**

**"I was incredibly naive. I underestimated the outpouring and support of the fiber community everywhere, so I was unprepared for the results, the logistics needed, the space requirements, the support help needed, and the emotional toll of pulling off such an undertaking under already stressful conditions.**

**"I called for support to help me sort the massive quantities of boxes and tubs that were pouring in nearly two weeks into it. I waited so long because I felt that everyone else was under stress and overwhelmed too and didn't need another thing on their plate. I should have called for help much sooner. People wanted to help, needed to help, and I certainly needed their support.**

**"We still received a few thousand skeins of inexpensive acrylic yarns from people who chose this opportunity to empty their stashes. Since we didn't expect [to receive so much non-LYS-quality yarn], we hadn't partnered with the city and county distribution centers, community centers and senior centers to take this off our hands. Next time, that will be one of the first things we do.**

**"With all the emotions flowing from everyone, we didn't think to collect names and contact information of fire victims early on. This would have helped to get packages to them later, once they were settled somewhere and had the space to receive them.**

**"Facebook proved to be the single most useful tool for connecting people, providing updated information and helping to locate customers and friends, victims and donators."**

**Phoenix Rising "was an extremely powerful and rewarding journey and one that emotionally connected people in ways none of us ever expected," says Fricks. "Would I do it again? In a heartbeat! And I strongly urge others who might find themselves going through a similar community disaster at some future time to reach out to the fiber community. You will receive all that you ask for and so much more."**

# A Moving Story

Relocating your shop can be the most lucrative hurdle you've ever jumped.

BY LESLIE PETROVSKI

**Thirty-two tons.** That's how much yarn, shelving, books, needles, bags, computers, accessories and other incidentals the online/bricks-and-mortar retailer The Loopy Ewe schlepped from St. Louis, Missouri, to its new home in Fort Collins, Colorado.

The move in 2011 represented a bucket-list goal for owners Sheri and Paul Berger. Having vacationed in the Centennial State for most of their married lives, the couple had long planned to retire near their beloved Rocky Mountains. But as time passed and the business continued to demand their attention, the pair decided heaven could no longer wait.

"It was kind of crazy," Sheri Berger says, "but we moved forward in blind faith, feeling it was the right thing to do."

## Move It or Lose It

Yarn purveyors move for many reasons. While the Bergers were able to satisfy a lifelong dream because their business had predominately taken place online, most bricks-and-mortar retailers are place-bound by home mortgages, kids' schools and customers who count on them, relocating only short distances to increase traffic, add space, escape uncooperative landlords or some combination thereof.

When Felicia Lo, owner of SweetGeorgia Yarns, started her Canadian-based hand-dyed yarn and fiber company in 2008, she

rented a 740-square-foot loft space in a building that housed the businesses of other creative folk, including photographers, filmmakers and sculptors. In addition to the inspirational vibe, her digs offered high ceilings, gorgeous light and sweeping views of the mountains and downtown Vancouver.

By early 2012, however, Lo and her five employees had to duck under racks of yarn to get from one end of the studio to the other. "I've been looking for years, ever since I started to expand in the old space, because I wanted to grow the business," she says. "But Vancouver real estate is extremely expensive. To find something that's nice and clean and safe for customers to come to—we're a production studio, but we get walk-in traffic—was tremendously difficult."

Meanwhile, in Seattle, The Fiber Gallery desperately needed an upgrade. Dissatisfied with the original space—a former TV repair shop with cement floors—and equally put off by a laissez-faire landlord who was unwilling to offer long-term leases despite the shop's eight-year tenure, owner Mary Harris and manager Jessica Rose longed to move. So when a similar-sized location became available 12 blocks away, closer to the heart of the bistro-and-boutique-heavy Greenwood neighborhood, they grabbed it.

"We have two things here we didn't have before," Rose explains: "a dedicated parking lot and air conditioning, which is not a big deal in Seattle, except when it is. The building is



about 100 years old and has more character and a warmer feel. We also have a friendly, more hands-on landlord who's willing to be more long-term with us, and that's great."

## Site Specific

Not every owner finds a cute storefront right down the street. To relocate her space, Lo stalked online listings, networked and worked with local real estate agents. A friend from her university days tipped her off to a concrete building with lots of natural light and parking in South Vancouver, along the Fraser River.

Before choosing a new site for The Loopy Ewe, the Bergers first moved house. Paul stayed behind in St. Louis to prepare for the move while Sheri worked in Colorado, occasionally traveling to Missouri to help out there. They found a second-floor space in a retail-business complex not far from the highway, near a SuperTarget, DSW Shoes and Toys R Us. Their new retail home would give them 900 additional square feet that was less "chopped up," plenty of natural light and the Bergers' critical must-have: "to be able to see the mountains every day."

Since the space was to be ready in December 2011, the Bergers scheduled their shop move early in the month, choosing the same company that transported their household goods that summer. Five movers shrink-wrapped shelves of yarn—obviating the need to pack—and began loading the truck. Before the largest available moving van was packed, it became clear that the vehicle wasn't big enough.

As luck would have it, Exodus had an empty truck coming through the area. "They rerouted the truck, so we piggy-backed on that," Sheri Berger explains. "They are an awesome company; if we ever move again, I would for sure use them. I don't think they had moved a yarn shop before, but they had fun with it."

On the Colorado end, however, things weren't going so smoothly. The couple learned that the Loopy Ewe's new space wouldn't be available until the middle of December, so their landlords set them up in two temporary spaces on the same floor as their permanent suite. Each mini-move involved routing Internet cables, troubleshooting the point-of-sale system, unpacking and restocking shelves. "That added extra flavor to the whole experience, for sure," Berger says. Despite the snafus, The Loopy Ewe's online business was down for only six days and the bricks-and-mortar store, one week.

In the case of SweetGeorgia Yarns, once Felicia Lo found her space in the riverside building, she had to negotiate a contract, work with the landlord and a contractor on the build-out (which included adding a second floor for offices and a lunchroom and creating a 150-square-foot retail area near the studio's entrance), submit building plans to the city of Vancouver for approval and wait. Because of the holidays—plans were submitted in October 2011—she didn't see a building permit until January 30, 2012. Within a few weeks, though, the company's new light-filled studio was ready.

Because of the timing, Lo decided to move in March, following FibresWest, the British Columbia fiber festival. She and her team took most of their stock to the show and put much of it on sale. Leftover merchandise was moved into the new space. Everything else was moved via U-Haul (which ended up being too small, requiring them to make four trips), securing friends' help with the promise of pizza.

"It actually wasn't too bad," she says. "We had to make sure we got our wholesale orders out, so we dyed and packed up at the last minute. And we moved everything on a Sunday. We were up and running after about two days."

To prepare for their move down the road in Seattle, Harris and Rose of The Fiber Gallery charted out the measurements of the new space on graph paper and then played with fixture cutouts until they achieved a layout they liked. They also consulted with Debi Ward Kennedy, a writer, merchandising expert and former *Yarn Market*



You've outgrown your shop and found the perfect new venue with wood floors, soaring windows and customer parking. How do you move thousands of balls of yarn and get your customers to follow?

- **Spread the word early and often.** Jessica Rose of The Fiber Gallery in Seattle says as soon as the new lease was signed, the staff started letting customers know about the big move by posting window signs, placing fliers in customers' bags, Facebooking and featuring the relocation as a top story in the shop newsletter. They also kept signs posted at the old site post-move, alerting stray customers where to go. "We still had some funny things happen," Rose explains. "We had people come in saying, 'We're so glad you guys are here, because that other shop closed.' Or, 'Oh, it's so nice to have a yarn shop in the neighborhood.' We were just down the street for eight years!"
- **Choose resources wisely.** Get recommendations for moving companies and solicit multiple bids. Also, notes Felicia Lo of SweetGeorgia Yarns, remain vigilant about communication. Her move ran into some snags when her real estate agent and new landlord didn't connect on key details. "There were things I asked for in the new space that weren't communicated to the landlord, whose first language isn't English," she says. "Once I got in touch with the landlord, we figured out we both speak Mandarin" and Lo got her hookups for water and stoves.
- **Out with the old.** Take your move as an opportunity to refresh your inventory. Hold a clearance sale and unburden yourself of tired merchandise and even unwanted fixtures.
- **Plan, plan and plan some more.** Take the time to make any alterations to the new space *before* you move in, then plan for moving day down to the letter. Rose had "Excel spreadsheets like crazy" so that she knew exactly where to tell volunteers to put everything, from the big community table to the Rowan.
- **Celebrate.** Use your new location as an opportunity to reconnect with lost customers and make new friends. Hold a grand reopening and offer incentives for people to visit the shop during the first month. Regulars and casual customers alike will be curious to see your new home.



Many shops, including Seattle's **The Fiber Gallery**, wrap shelving in plastic to make the move simpler.

News Smart Business Conference speaker, for ideas on how to best use the space.

"For a reasonable fee, she gave us a lot of helpful advice," says Rose. "We have a huge storage area [in the new space] that's not connected to the store. You have to walk out and into the basement. There's plenty of storage room, but it involves saying, 'Let me get it for you—can you wait five minutes?'" She helped us work on solutions to maximize storage space in the actual store."

She also advised them to add lettering on the windows, to make clear to passersby that The Fiber Gallery is unmistakably a yarn shop that caters to knitters, crocheters and other fiberniks.

"We worked up a floor plan and taped it out on the floor with painter's tape," Rose explains. "We were careful about keeping aisles wide enough for clearance to get strollers and wheelchairs through. We then did a walk-through once we had things the way we wanted them."



At the shop's annual sale at its old locale, The Fiber Gallery cleared out a lot of merchandise. "We were merciless about what would

and would not come with us," Rose explains. After the sale, left-over clearance items moved to owner Mary Harris's basement, across the street from the new location.

The Fiber Gallery closed for three days in early January. On day one, an army of trusted customer volunteers helped pack and organize for the move. Day two, the movers arrived, shrink-wrapping the smaller yarn shelves (including a spinner rack with magazines interred inside), stashing mannequins and baskets into the boxes they provided, and hauling a mountain of labeled trash bags filled with yarn from larger shelves. The physical move took about half a day. On day three, more volunteers helped unpack.

By day four, Rose says, "It looked like a yarn store, though we didn't have things hung up on the walls. It went pretty darn smoothly—I'm kind of amazed."

## The Long Haul

Shop owners who have undertaken a move agree that it's not for the faint of heart. Not only is it costly—in the case of the Loopy Ewe, on the high end with its state-hopping move, between \$12,000 and \$15,000—it's also stressful and distracting.

"It was pretty intense for a while," admits Harriet McNabb of the Village Yarn Shop in Zionsville, Indiana, who decided to move because space constraints had forced her to stash back stock in the shop's fridge and microwave. "But we had a lovely moving company that got it done in about half a day."

Sheri Berger says that in the end, the move was completely worth it. In addition to trading Midwest humidity for Colorado's balmy weather, the couple has discovered that the Mile High postal system is more efficient. "Online customers might get shipments a little quicker because the Denver system works a little quicker," she says. "That was an initial concern: How would the move impact deliveries? But we have awesome service, so there's been no lag in sales."

At SweetGeorgia Yarns, dyeing became much easier in the aftermath of the move. "Basically, we tripled our production capacity," Lo says. "Everybody's mood is different, because there's more space to breathe and walk around. We're not on top of each other anymore."

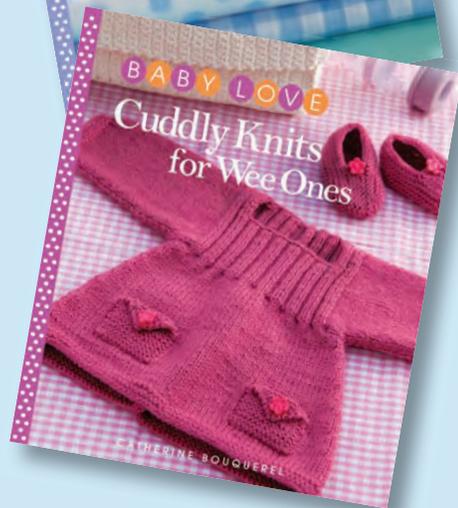
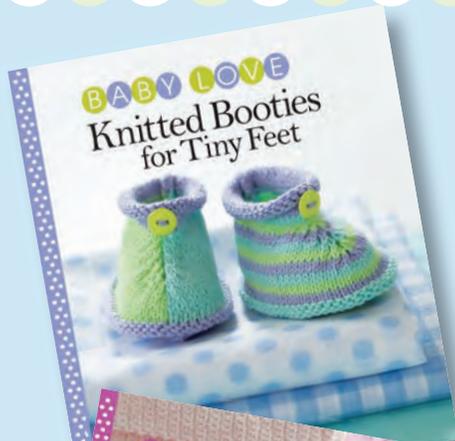
McNabb's new location, three blocks away, now has a separate kitchen area and more room for classes and storage and is closer to restaurants. She estimates that the move has netted her about 30 percent more traffic. "We are very happy with it. We like it much, much better."



Felicia Lo of **SweetGeorgia Yarns** took the time to customize her new space with offices and a signature hot pink wall before loading looms and dye pots for the move.



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The Woodland sweater - pictured here - was featured at the The National Needlearts Association show in Columbus Ohio from June 23-25. This beautiful sweater pattern along with Yahoko's Treasure afghan and Mega Herringbone mittens are all available for download at [patternfish.com](http://patternfish.com).

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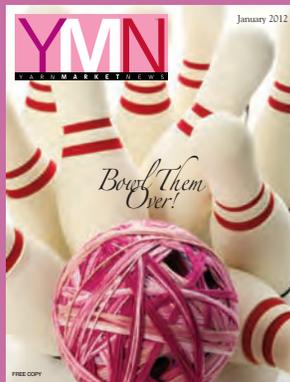
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# Casing Beth Casey

*As TNNA Yarn Group chairperson, Beth Casey is more visible than ever within our industry. And as owner of Lorna's Laces, she is finding new ways to make her yarns more visible, too. YMN's Erin Slonaker sat down with Casey over lunch at the North Market in Columbus in June to find out what else she has in store.*



**YMN: First things first. When did you learn to knit? Who taught you? Are you a Continental or English knitter? Circulars or straights?**

**BC:** I learned to knit when I was in my late twenties. I had just moved from St. Louis to Kansas City, where I didn't know anyone, for a job. Making friends was hard. One day, I had a meeting with two colleagues who were both wearing beautiful Icelandic yoke sweaters. It turned out they were both knitters, and they had made the sweaters themselves. I thought knitting might be something I'd enjoy, and not long after I enrolled in a beginning knitting class at The Yarn Barn in Lawrence, Kansas. It was love at first stitch.

I knit English style; I've tried Continental and just can't get the hang of it. I am slowly transitioning from straights to circulars on most projects, but I am a dyed-in-the-wool fan of double-points for socks. There is something magical to me in juggling four or five pointy sticks and ending up with a sock.

**YMN: You're one of the growing number of people who didn't learn to knit from a mother or grandmother. Do you think that changes the way you approach the craft?**

**BC:** It's a hard question to answer because I don't have any basis for comparison. Crafting seemed to come and go when I was growing up. My dad hooked rugs for a while, and I'm old enough to have taken part in the great summer of macramé and candle making. Because knitting was something I made a decision to learn as an adult, it has become an integral part of the fabric of my life. If it had been just another segment in an arts and crafts class I took as a kid, I doubt it would have stuck with me the same way.

**YMN: What led you to purchasing Lorna's Laces nine years ago?**

**BC:** The short answer is that I answered an ad in a magazine. The longer version goes more like this: After working in college textbook publishing for almost eleven years, I was incredibly bored and increasingly unhappy with my job. One day, my husband got fed up with my grouching and grumbling and told me to quit my job. So I did!

I spent the next three years trying to figure out what was next for me. I studied bread baking at the French Culinary Institute in New York. I walked dogs. I watched far too much daytime television. Oh, and I knit. And knit some more.

One day I was thumbing through a knitting magazine, looking for my next project, and ran across one of those little half-inch ads in the back. Basically it said, "Hand-dyed yarn company for sale. Can be relocated." About a month later, I flew out to the original Lorna's Laces studio in northern California to meet Lorna Miser, the company founder. We negotiated the details of the sale over the next few weeks. She taught me what I needed to know, and the rest is history.

**YMN: How have you changed or grown the company in your time at the helm?**

**BC:** I was fortunate to have found a great business at a great time in the industry. In the early days, I worked hard to maintain the reputation Lorna had established. Soon enough, it was time to make it my own.

Over time, we've grown. We've expanded our physical space and hired additional staff to help meet demand. Our creative sense has evolved. We have a new logo and an updated website. Different eyes and hands are manning the dye pots, so the color sensibility isn't the same. What hasn't changed is our dedication to making beautiful yarn and taking good care of our customers. Without yarn shops and their customers, we would be irrelevant.

**YMN: Solemate has added technology to your yarn. Will you be exploring other new yarns like that? What does the future hold for Lorna's Laces?**

**BC:** Lorna's Laces has always been about classic fibers and beautiful colors. At the same time, I'm fascinated by the way one fiber interacts with another and with dye. The Outlast fiber that is in Solemate and Sportmate appealed to my technical side. I wanted to see how it would perform in hand-knitting yarns. We're seeing some very interesting combinations of fibers these days. Some are innovative and some are new

spins on old ideas. That's the direction I'm looking in right now. I want to explore some of those new combinations and how the dyes will create interest among knitters.

**YMN: I'm intrigued by the recent partnership you announced with Soak Wash and Fiona Ellis. Do you have other unique ventures in the works?**

**BC:** We love working with other companies in the industry. I'm a firm believer that the synergies created by the collaborative process allow us to bring out better products. We're planning on continuing and expanding our work with Soak Wash. Our Color Commentary Series is still going strong, and we'll be announcing a new crochet-centric partnership there very soon.

**YMN: As the president of Yarn Group, you have an important job in the industry. How do you view your role as a TNNA leader?**

**BC:** I think the most important thing I do as the chair of Yarn Group is to keep my ear to the ground. That means interacting with and talking to LYS owners and wholesalers to find out what we can do to make their businesses more successful. I believe we need to work together to make the yarn industry better for all of us. The more I hear from members, the more I can try to effect change.

**YMN: What's next for the yarn industry?**

**BC:** I wish I could tell you. My crystal ball is full of wool! Actually, I think this is a phenomenal time to be working in yarn. We are the custodians of a timeless art form in an age of enormous technological advances. While rooted in tradition, I see the industry embracing the change provided by the Internet and social media. Our next step will be taking it mobile. We'll have apps right along with needles in our knitting bags. We'll continue to see advances in yarns. Whether it's new materials like Outlast or new combinations with old friends like silk and wool, we'll keep marching on to provide exciting new products that will keep people stitching.

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