

Y2Knit

THE QUESTION AT THE LITTLE PINK HOUSE IN FUNKSTOWN AS IT GEARS UP FOR THE FALL SEASON, IS WHY NOT?

by Holly Rudy... photos by Julie Lutz Hipkins

Susan Wolcott hopes crafters—from novices to the highly skilled—will think pink and visit her business Y2Knit in the charming pink house at 100 E. Baltimore St. in Funkstown. The business name evokes both the new millennium and the lure of knitting: Why to knit.

Susan and her sister, Jill, started the business storing yarn in their homes and selling it at knitting retreats. After living in Fairfax, Va., Susan craved a change of scenery and was drawn to Funkstown's rolling landscape, abundance of history and affordability—and to the prospect of an untapped market for knitting accessories and supplies.

The sisters expanded their business with the store opening and Jill—who now lives in San Francisco—has published 40 knitwear designs which they have started selling wholesale to yarn shops. They still offer the knitting retreats six to seven times a year in locations including Sacramento, Calif.; Shelburne, Vt.; and Allentown, Pa.

Susan said she learned to knit around age 9 and resumed knitting a few years ago. She said that, typically, interest in knitting skips a generation or age group. It is currently enjoying renewed interest among young people, aided by the revival of knitted ponchos and decorative scarves.

Susan said the store has taken off well as she has developed a solid base of regular customers locally and from the Washington and Baltimore areas. The busiest season is October through February, when customers stock up on supplies and projects as winter weather approaches.

Their yarn is supplied by many different vendors. Most of the yarn is imported from Europe; however, Y2Knit purchases yarn from companies in the United States that produce their own wool. Susan attends trade shows twice a year to keep up with the latest trends in color and fibers. Basic fibers include silk, wool and cotton. New to the market are fibers made from bamboo and soy. Cotton blended with elastic is hot—as knitting socks is a favorite project.

The newest trend is felting. Once a project has been knitted loosely out of wool yarn, it is washed in hot water until it shrinks. It's a great way to add body to a hat or a bag.

Another popular item in knitting circles is the book *Stitch 'n Bitch: The Knitter's Handbook* by Debbie Stoller. The book adds a modern spin to the traditional conservative craft and is intended to appeal to all ages, including the newest target market of 20- to 30-year-olds.

Samples of completed projects hang from mannequins and



Fall and winter colors make up this sampling of several types of yarn available at Y2Knit in Funkstown.

are displayed on shelves at Y2Knit. Susan said the purpose is to stimulate and inspire customers, giving them a visual representation of what the yarn looks like "knitted up." Typically, the samples are not for sale. However, with the store's increased popularity and growing assortment of yarns, samples are increasing as well and will soon be priced for sale.

Susan and Jill both have teaching backgrounds, and Jill currently teaches at The Fashion Institute in San Francisco. The heart of what they do with knitting is teaching and, in that spirit, they created a class called Pass Knit On. Susan said it is one of Y2Knit's most popular classes, utilizing the sisters' teaching experience to teach people to teach others. They had three sold-out sessions in July.

Business

Y2KNIT KNITTING WORKSHOPS

Learning to knit can be a fun and practical hobby. Susan and Jill offer several classes this fall for knitters.

Susan and Jill will be knitting in Funkstown on Oct. 22 and 23 in Town Hall. They will hold workshops on topics including basic beginner techniques and tips to ensure your project fits the intended recipient.

Two Fall Knitting Getaways were scheduled in October. A "Knitting Getaway Weekend" was held in Sacramento, Calif., on Oct. 1-3. And a "5-Day Knitting Getaway Experience" will be held in Shelburne, Vt., on Oct. 27-31. The brochure lists numerous classes, and optional yoga and massage will be available. Twenty knitters will be joined by the Y2Knit staff to have a relaxing experience and be "At all times: knitting!"

For more information, visit the Web site at www.y2knit.net or call 301-766-4543. The store's hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Above: A sampling of the types of projects knitters can learn to make through Y2Knit workshops. Right: Y2Knit owner Susan Wolcott shows off a brightly colored knitted cardigan.



Susan also is the author of *Knitter's Notes*, a helpful workbook aiding readers in planning their knitting projects, and she and Jill have a book in the works that teaches readers to knit in the German continental style, said to be more ergonomic. She said no other books on the market illustrate that style.

Knitting has broad appeal in part because it results in a functional product. Susan described the craft as "very earthy."

Another aspect of knitting that Susan finds appealing is its portability and the fact it allows you to engage in conversation or be aware of your environment as you do it. You can take a knitting project to a ball game, to knitting groups or on a long car ride. She said some people even take knitting projects to work.

Aside from the enjoyment and productivity of knitting, Susan relishes the meditative aspect of the craft. She believes that in the midst of our busy lives, we need something that relaxes us. Brain wave studies have proven that knitting—as well as other repetitive crafts—affords the same physical benefits as meditation or yoga.

One of the health benefits of knitting is it can lower blood pressure. Susan said that when she knits in time with her breathing it helps relieve stress. She also

related a story about a woman in one of her classes who told her that the day after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, she went to the store to stock up on yarn because knitting calmed her soul and gave her something productive to do.

The pink log house where Y2Knit is located was the former site of Hudson House Antiques. The section that houses the knitting store is part of the original structure built in the late 1700s. Susan intended to paint the house yellow, but over time she came to realize the unusual color adds to the character of the house and has made it a landmark.

Susan offers some advice for people who are just starting to knit.

"Depending on how a person learns," she said, "find someone to teach you, whether it's a yarn shop, a friend or a relative," she said. Then, find some quality yarn and "have a good time." ♥

Y2
knit



Yarn
Workshops
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October 22-23: 2 days of workshops!
Call, email or stop by for details.

11:30-6 Tues-Fri, 10-5 Sat
Closed Sun.-Mon.

100 E. Baltimore St., Funkstown
301.766.4543 www.y2knit.net