

Handmade crafts make unique gifts



By NANCY HOSKIN
 Have you been spending countless hours in department store line-ups recently? Confused and frustrated because you can't find a gift that doesn't look like the hundred others you left behind on the shelf? Don't despair, there are several shops in Markham that specialize in selling unique, one-of-a-kind gifts.

During the past few years the making and selling of hand-made crafts has become popular. Nothing is nicer than receiving a gift that someone has taken the time to make. These gifts can range from detailed stained glass windows to delicate stitching on a child's dress.

Most people that make crafts tell you that they aren't doing it for the money, because the monetary gain can never touch the time it takes to make anything, whether it is a seemingly simple Christmas ornaments or an original quilt. Crafts take time to make, and craftsmen usually make these items because they love doing it.

The Markham Guild of Village Crafts enlists hundreds of craftsmen each year to join their organization. They offer classes in a wide variety of crafts, from tile painting to pottery.

Don't think for a moment that the Guild is limited to female members. On the contrary, there are many male members with unique talents, including, wood working and stained glass.

The Guild has a shop, open year round, that sells crafts made by their members, and has expanded during the holiday season with a variety of unique gift giving ideas.

Open each Friday and Saturday, during December, they offer gifts for everybody on your shopping list. Knitted sweaters and dyed silk scarves make lovely gifts for ladies, while children will adore the wooden toys and stuffed animals.

There are two stores, in Markham and Unionville, that also specialize in handmade crafts. Grandma's Pantry and General Store, located on the Ninth Line,

just north of Hwy. 7, opened in September.

The store has enlisted the talent of 36 local craftsmen and sells their work on consignment.

Located in an old barn, each wall and beam is lined with unique gift ideas. There are placemats, dried flower arrangements, quilted hoops, needlepoint, wooden puzzles, dolls, quilts and much more.

A Christmas tree stands in one corner filled with hundreds of ornaments, some made of ceramic, others of clothespins and ping-pong balls.

"Crafts make unique gifts because they are unique," said Barb Jones, co-owner of Grandma's Pantry. "You'll never find two items that are exactly the same. There are so many people out there with different styles and ideas."

Located on the Main Street, in Unionville, is Fancy That Idea. Everything in this store is made by the mother and daughter team of Bev and Sandy Parker.

Barb Jones, co-owner of Grandma's Pantry and General Store, shows off a selection of handmade crafts and ornaments for Christmas gift giving.

— Nancy Hoskin

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