

GETTING CRAFTY

CRAFT CHAINS USEFUL FOR NEWBIES

Interested in starting your own yarn crafts? Maybe honing your skills as the secret painting master you've always thought you might be? Something to keep in mind for when going to look for craft stores if you're not necessarily an expert in the field: look for chain stores that offer a variety of things so you can look around and really find something that interests you instead of settling. Here are some stores around town that could help in your hunt for the perfect tools, tricks and inspirations.

Hobby Lobby

Hobby Lobby offers a little (or a lot) of everything. From yarn and knitting supplies to painting and usually within the budget of the college student who is looking for some leisure.

Hours: Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

2775 E. Grand River Ave. (517) 337-9253

Michael's

This is a craft store for someone who may be a little more dedicated to a specific craft, as opposed to those going to Hobby Lobby hoping to dabble in a little bit of this and a little bit of that. A little more expensive on the fabric and yarn front, Michael's still offers high quality ingredients for your perfect craft night.

Hours: Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Frando Shopping Center, in Lansing (517) 332-1778

Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Larger Superstore

The specialty here, obviously, is focused on the fabrics offered, as opposed to the other categories of crafts (though they also boast an impressive jewelry supplies section). As a chain store, just like the others above, they are also able to offer sales more frequently, making the appeal to college students even more apparent.

Hours: Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Frando Shopping Center, in Lansing 533 Mall Court (517) 664-1061

— compiled by Cole Bertson, The State News

FACES + PLACES

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HELLO, MY NAME IS

Jessie Neilson

Music education senior Jessie Neilson always knew she loved music. "It's just what I do," she said. "It just feels good to sing."

Neilson stars as La Cieca in Giacomo Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi." The MSU College of Music is putting on "Gianni Schicchi" along with "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" starting Friday. A regular cast member of MSU Opera Theatre, Neilson has been appearing on stage since her freshman year.

Her character, La Cieca, is involved in a scheme to rewrite the will of her dead relative, Busso Donati.

"She is a little bit crazy," she said. "We just found out that he left all of his money to the church and we're trying to pretend that he's not dead so we can rewrite the will and get the money."

— Compiled by Kate Jacobson, photo by Sean Cook, The State News



Wednesday



"I'm addicted," Okemos resident Barbara Hawkins said while loading a shuttle with superwash merino yarn to weave a baby blanket on a loom for a friend Tuesday afternoon at Woven Art, 325B Grove St. Hawkins learned how to weave by attending a class hosted by Woven Art owner Nancy McRay about a year ago and aspires to turn her passion into a business by producing custom pieces for customers.

JASON CHIU / THE STATE NEWS

a close-knit business

Woven Art born from passion for fiber arts to teach knitting to community

By Julie Baker
THE STATE NEWS

Nancy McRay tried to ignore it — the nagging little voice in her head that whispered "Weaver!" She took the practical approach: advertising degree from MSU in 1977, job in the advertising department of the Lansing State Journal, marriage, children and a position as a local arts coordinator. But the voice wouldn't go away. "While I was at MSU as an undergraduate, I would just kind of lurk around what was then the (Department of Human Environment and Design),

where they have looms and they had a weaving class and I would try to get into it and I couldn't," said McRay, owner of Woven Art, 325B Grove St.

"I would just stand at the doorway and gaze in. I knew, I always knew."

Her love affair with all things woven started at age 20 with knitting and crocheting, something her mother and sisters did. In high school, she started to sell a

few things that she had made but didn't have her hopes set on making woven art her life.

"You couldn't take that seriously. (It was) like 'OK, that's nice, that's not a career. Go to school and get a career and then you can do that as just a hobby,'" said McRay, who also got her master's degree in fine arts from the University of Michigan in 1994. "I really wish I'd listened to my inner instincts."

After receiving her degree from U-M, she started teaching weaving in East Lansing — something that led to a position as a local arts coordinator. But she still didn't have the time to focus on her own art. That's when she finally gave up.

In 2002, she started trying to make a career out of her fiber art. She sold skeins

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ENTREPRENEURS

Student business brings unique Spartan gear to E.L.

By Daniel Luscombe
THE STATE NEWS

In a world where multi-billion-dollar corporations are struggling to survive, a group of MSU entrepreneurs have launched a profitable business from the humble beginnings of a Brody Hall dorm room.

The company, My Spartan T-shirt, was created in late 2008 when students Kevin McGraw, Rudy Supanich, Kevin Campbell and Nic Mangat noticed the lack of original MSU apparel available.

"We all kind of realized that all the Spartan shirts we saw that were out there, from the book stores, were monochromatic white or green," said Mangat, an advertising junior. "Everyone is just dishing out

money for the same shirts and it's just kind of redundant."

Spartan spirit aside, the business also was a way to earn extra cash.

"We thought it would be better than getting a job in the cafeteria, better than working on Grand River somewhere," said McGraw, a marketing freshman.

The group focused on creating original designs and, as part of their business philosophy, limited the number of shirts they created to make sure their customers had unique shirts.

"The whole point of doing this was to have fresh and interesting shirts that people don't have, so we kind of like limit our numbers," Campbell said. "Everyone wants to have something that everyone else doesn't have."

Ordering their first set of 300 T-shirts was a time of anxiety for the students. Money was at risk, and they were unsure of what people would think of their product.

"We were kind of worried about it because we had to throw down, each of us, a significant amount of money, and we weren't sure how many we would be able to sell," Campbell said. "We had to make a shirt that we knew would sell because if we're going to throw the money in there it has to work out."

The first shirt, inspired by the song "Phone Home" by rapper Lil' Wayne, read in capital letters, "WE ARE NOT THE SAME. I Am a Spartan." Supanich, a civil engineering freshman, said the shirts

sold well because of the home-grown nature of their business, he said. Before launching their Web site, myspantanshirt.com, shirts were peddled from their dorm rooms.

"(Customers) came to our room and were pretty surprised that we were just students," Supanich said. "It actually helped us kind of because a lot of students like helping out the other kids that are doing it."

Another boost to the students' business was when rapper Asher Roth, who opened for Lape Fiasco at the MSU Auditorium on Feb. 12, wore one of their T-shirts.

us. That was a lot of exposure." The group agrees that while the business does profit, the satisfaction they get is an even greater value.

"I think one of the best feelings was just like walking around or being at a party and seeing someone wearing your shirt," Campbell said.

Mangat said, in the face of struggling world economy, he has found inspiration in the success of the upstart small business.

"Especially with how bunk the economy is right now, it's harder and harder for people to do what they love and still have an income," Mangat said. "That's what we're kind of keeping in mind. As much money as we make, this is something we love doing. It's like a passion."