

Student budgets benefit from quality handicrafts



The only thing that is "senior citizen" about the Senior Citizen Craft Shoppe in Oregon City is the name, according to Lela Watson, six-year veteran manager.

The Shoppe, located at 721 Main Street, is chuck-full of hand-made crafts designed by local residents and sold on consignment with a one-third commission mark-up by the store.

"We take anything hand-made and new," Watson said. "I mean you can't go out and buy something and put it in the shop. We've had people buy stuff here because they were made by hand instead of Japan."

The Shoppe began in March 1967 at 216 Seventh Street under the management of Helen Curtis, long-time senior citizen resident of Oregon City, said Toni Pfeifer, president of the corporation. At that time it had the backing of the Clackamas County Economic Opportunity, a branch of the state office of Economic Opportunity.

In December 1968 the corporation withdrew from the EOA "because they could make their own way", Pfeifer said. The Shoppe changed location to 706 Main and then in 1972 moved to its present location.

"I took the shop over in 1971," Watson said. "I had never been in the store before the morning I walked in to take it over. We had no help and very little money."

"Back then you had to be a member to sell goods," Pfeifer said. "It was a 145-member group then and it has grown considerably since then."

A non-profit organization, the shoppe is strictly run by volunteer help. There are two volunteers at one time each day with 14 in-all.

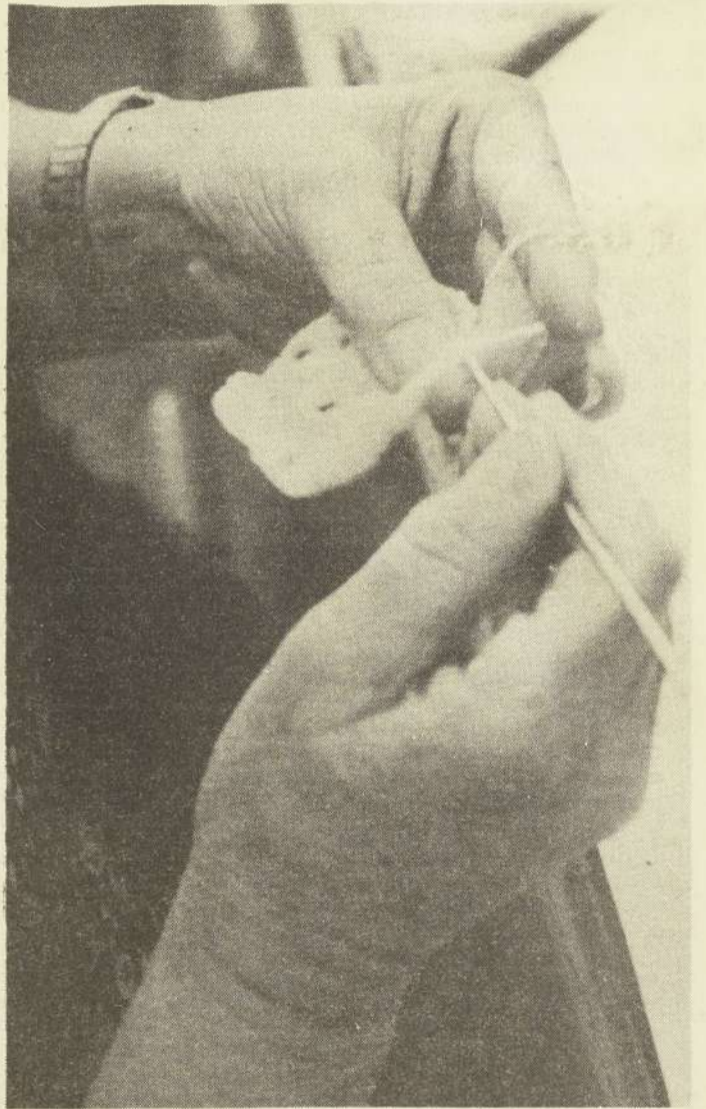
"There's a policy of no-refund and no exchange," Watson said. "If they pay us for a craft and it is at the end of the month and I pay the other fellow, then there is no way to get the money back."

Everything is a big seller, Watson said. Some sellers include wooden toys, baby things, kitchen items--dish towels, pot-holders, aprons, decorations--house slippers, afghans, capes, quilts, comforters and purses, among an array of many other items, which are all priced very, very inexpensively.

"We also have hand-made dolls," Watson said. "We use to sell an awful lot, but most of them don't sell like they used to."

"I guess I'm getting a little bit hard-nosed," she said. "If something doesn't sell, I'll tell them to take it somewhere else to sell it. Sometimes an idea goes out of style."

The Shoppe is open Monday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., "but, we stay open if something is going on," Watson said.



Ada Jordan (above, left) and Mable Vaughn, clerks at the Senior Citizens' Store in Oregon City, discuss sales during a brief lull in business. Vaughn, (right) works on a baby afghan which, when finished, will be sold in the store. At bottom, various hand-crafted wares are displayed within the store.

Photos by Lorraine Stratton

By Cyndi Bacon
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