

KNIT, CROCHET, SPIN, WEAVE

Long Beach hosts festival for fiber fanatics

BY PATRICK WEBB

I have missed a stitch; I have to go back,” laments Eleanor Will. Around the table, the click of needles falls silent as women indicate they feel her pain.

But this circle of kindred spirits sipping chamomile tea at the Tapestry Rose Yarn Shop in Ocean Park, Washington, is as divided as the Sharks and the Jets. Some crochet, some knit.

They tease incessantly.

“I will see a pattern and put my own spin on it,” says Linda Granfors, as she knits a hat and cowl. “I can’t crochet. It’s like a foreign language to me.”

Next to her, Diane Seifert crafts an intricate multicolored pin cushion to fasten on her wrist. On the table in front of her is a stuffed woolen pumpkin she created.

“I am a crochet person . . . only,” she says, quietly but firmly. “I am not going over to the ‘dark side!’”

Collaboration

Seifert is among those putting together a new event called the Columbia Pacific Fiber Arts Festival. It will be held Saturday through Sunday at the Chautauqua Lodge in Long Beach. She’s also secretary of the newly formed Columbia Pacific Fiber Arts Association and will teach a class on mosaic crochet.

The two-day event will feature

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Linda Granfors of Ocean Park knits creations, but says she finds crochet ‘a foreign language.’ Like many, she delights in adapting patterns to her own preference.

Calming creativity: Shelly McSweyn loves sharing her handiwork

By Patrick Webb

Shelly McSweyn is an organizer of the Columbia Pacific Fiber Arts Festival.

She acknowledges that people in the craft world took different paths, but often with common elements.

“I learned to crochet when I was 10 years old,” she said. “My grandmother and my aunt taught me, as they were both very good at it.

“It was clear to me then that using my hands was something that came pretty naturally to me and also something

that I really liked.

“My father bought me a sewing machine when I was 16 so then I taught myself to sew and embroider.

“In my 40s, I finally decided to try knitting and have been working to get better at it ever since.”

She savors the calming element. Now retired, she recalls coming home from work and feeling accomplishment even if she only completed one row.

“I work on some piece of handwork every day of the week, no matter what. It makes me calm down if I have had a

stressful day and it makes me happy on any given day.”

Sharing is another element, bringing joy to others.

“I have found that most people who are involved in handwork are usually pretty generous and inclusive, they love to share their knowledge, techniques, patterns, materials,” she said. “And they love to share their finished products.

“It’s pretty normal to hear a handwork person admit that they rarely end up keeping their work — they usually give it away as a gift to a lucky recipient. At a knitting table, it’s not uncommon to hear someone ask, ‘Is that for you?’ because often, it is not for the person making the item.”