

BASKETS from page 1A

"They were very busy," Bennett said about the toy giveaway, which also gave out stocking stuffers and socks and gloves for all the children.

Then, at Siuslaw Middle School, the food basket giveaway took place, which had a count of 350 families showing up to receive ingredients for a home-cooked holiday meal. The boxes included chicken or turkey, cranberry sauce, canned vegetables and other traditional holiday staples.

"We also added chicken broth this year, but I don't think that's a newsworthy item," Bennett said.

The boxes also included cookies from the Little Dutch Boy Cookie Company, which are donated directly from the company in their hometown of Draper, Utah, specifically for this event.

"They send those to Roby's, who stored them in time for delivery," said Bennet.

Roby's Furniture and Appliance was just one part of a community wide effort to help bring food to local residents, as over 100 volunteers helped out in the event.

"We had the Camp Florence boys, several people from the casino, Rotarians, kids from the Interact Club, the new owners of Grocery Outlet, St. Vincent DePaul, and firefighters who helped direct the traffic and put boxes in the cars," Bennet said. "We have a lot of people who are loyal to the program and come every year. I just want to thank the community and all the volunteers and the people who donated both toys and money."

Despite the large number of people who showed up to receive the food, there were still leftovers, which were given to Florence Food Share.

"That's okay," said Bennett. "We'd rather buy a little more than we need then run out. My bet is, the food we gave Saturday is already gone. The important thing is that we're feeding the people."



Hundreds of families received toys at the Florence Church of the Nazarene, and even more picked up Community Christmas Baskets at Siuslaw Middle School, as part of an annual service to the community by Soroptimist members.



PHOTOS BY JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS



FELT from page 1A

Kathy Elfers, one of the founding members of the Siuslaw Fiber Guild, has won recognition for her works' unique design elements, as well as the scale and interpretation of her sub-

ject matter. She has shown her unique felt creations at venues focused on art and presented her textiles at fiber shows, receiving awards for the work in both situations.

This month, she joined a select group of coastal fiber artists

and craftspeople who are being recognized for their work in furthering the field of textile arts. Her exhibition, "Out of the Box: Contemporary Design in Felt Making," is part of the Coastal Oregon Visual Artist Showcase (COVAS) through Jan. 26 at the Newport Visual Arts Center, 777 NW Beach Dr. in Newport.

Tom Webb, Oregon Coast Council for Arts (OCCA) Director for the Newport Visual Arts Center, believes Elfers' work is important both as an excellent example of the use of felting for clothing and warmth, but also work that is worthy of consideration as something more.

"Elfers works in the styles of wet felting, needle felting and other styles, and she will present wall hangings, wall sculpture and 3D objects, some incorporating mixed media," Webb said. "The OCCA welcomes Elfers and her exhibition."

Elfers studied graphic arts for two years at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Later, she

Kathy Elfers uses a variety of techniques in her fiber art pieces, including wet felting and needle felting, to create unique textures.

moved to Bend and pursued Siuslaw Public studies in primitive cultures and archeology. She has also been strongly influenced by native designs, working with deer and elk leather, creating traditional and contemporary art and clothing, and incorporating techniques from these skills into her felting.

Elfers' current work is centered around the use of one of the oldest techniques of felt artisans, wet felting. She uses more modern forms of felting, along with this traditional method, to push past what are generally considered the boundaries of the process.

During wet felting, the strands are inundated with hot water and the fibers are physically agitated to cause a melding of the individual fibers into a more solidified fabric-like material.

The more modern and familiar technique for felting is known as needle felting. Needle felting does not use water in the fiber stretching, stripping and melding process, but uses specially designed needles to entangle and connect dry fibers.

Elfers combines elements from these and other techniques in many of her pieces, including wrapping felt around and into itself to create a layered effect.

This is a technique that is also old, but still employed in some special situations.

"The combination of traditional and modern techniques, and experimenting with various fibers, allows me to create a multitude of visual and textural effects," Elfers said.

One example of the versatility of felt is its continued inclusion in the production of many musical instruments, such as the piano. The hammers that strike the strings of a piano are made with wooden centers, then felt is wound around the wood core. The quality of the felt, particularly its density and springiness, will go a long way to determining the tone of the note struck. When the felt is worn out, the piano will be noticeably out of tune.

One of Elfers most impressive exhibits was held last year at the

Library.

The open space in the main room at the library can be described as soaring. Large windows set into the dome at the top of the building let light stream down into the space where there are computers, music and movies.

There are also wall spaces that are used to display work from other artists that are included in the visually stimulating space. Elfers took advantage of the distance of the ceiling to the floor and hung a number of long, tentacle like extensions that were tied into a series of multi-limbed animal representations, inspired by creatures of the sea.

This "Out of the Box thinking," as regards the over-sized appearance and much larger design concepts in individual pieces, gave rise to the name of her current exhibit in Newport.

In addition, Elfers' use of many individual components in her work differentiates and elevates her pieces above others in her field. Her current expanded vision of her craft has been a part of an ongoing progression, from her perspective.

"In 1999, I watched a group of students making felted hats. Fascinated by the process, I took the class with Gin DeCamp and fell in love with the art form," Elfers said. "It was magical to lay the loose felt fiber, add soap and start rubbing. Within a short time, I could feel the fiber beginning to bind and tangle on itself."

Webb encourages interested individuals to come by the Newport Visual Arts Center to check out some of the latest work by an artist that has successfully merged an ancient fiber technique with modern artistic sensibilities.

"COVAS features mid-career



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

artists living on the Oregon coast and rotates artists from throughout Oregon's seven coastal counties. Having lived in Florence for the past 10 years, Kathy Elfers will be representing Coastal Lane County in the Showcase," Webb said.

Her inclusion in this exhibit is an important recognition of the level and quality of the work she is producing. Although the display area dedicated to Elfers is small, the pieces highlighted capture the originality and intricacy of her larger, more ambitious pieces.

Elfers is pleased to be able to showcase the current work she is doing and feels a responsibility to her craft to keep the traditions and techniques of felting alive and vital.

"It's very important that I make my contribution in preserving these ancient skills and traditions," Elfers says. "I consider myself a keeper of the felting tradition. As with an antique, it is my responsibility to preserve and protect, and then pass it on to the next generation."

Elfers' exhibit, "Out of the Box: Contemporary Design in Felt Making" will be at the Newport Center until the end of January.

Her work can also currently be seen at Backstreet Gallery in Florence, Mindpower Gallery in Reedsport and Latigo and Lace in Augusta, Mont.

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