

TerriAnn in Torrance

The Craft Delight Program: Where Creative Crafters Meet

By TerriAnn Ferren

Are you artistic or gifted? Are you a craft person? There are those in Torrance who are brimming with talent. They knit, crochet, make cards, and devise all sorts of other artistic creations every week. Last Wednesday, I visited a group of people who gather at Isabel Henderson Library for socializing, knitting, crocheting and creating lots of other handmade items.

It all began six years ago when Gail Van Vranken, who was Senior Librarian at the Isabel Henderson Library at the time, was looking to develop adult programming--and because she loves crafts, she thought a craft program would be perfect. Gail told me she wanted a place "where people could come and meet, congregate, interface and help each other when they were having [craft] problems, get inspiration for their next project and share ideas. It was just a program where people would bring in their portable crafts and have space to do it for two hours [noon until 2 p.m.]."

Gail began with seven participants and the group has grown to 15-20 people. A lot of people knit and crochet simply because



Sage and Ava Marshall.

ways and although it may not look like much, for me it is a lot," said Mary Kahler as she proudly showed me her crocheted potholder. Mary went on to tell me she doesn't consider herself a "crafter." She thinks of herself as a "reader" and said, "That's why this is such a big deal to me and Gail knows this is a big deal to me. I come because there is always something to learn."

Next I spoke with Sue Wilson, who was busy making a baby blanket. She said, "I knit simple patterns, hats, baby blankets... and donate them. They go to my neighbor who is retired from Harbor General and they go with her. We did send some to Cleveland, Texas through Manhattan Beach after the hurricane."

The particular Wednesday I visited the *Craft Delight Program*, Gail brought in the quilt she is currently working on and told me, "This is a quilt that I made and I am going to ask people who do more quilting than I do... I am looking for the binding--should I use this, or use something darker? This quilt will be donated to an abused women's shelter in Long Beach, which is where this quilt will be going."

The group is open to absolutely everyone. One interesting bit of information I learned from the group was that they have "seasonal members" who arrive in Southern California for the "winter months" to participate in the group, and then return home during the summer months.

Chris Mosher told me she has been participating in the group about six months and said, "I have been crocheting and knitting since I was 15. Some people from this group came to our Monday group, so word of mouth. Everybody is so friendly and helpful. I like to make baby blankets. We give them to Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach for cancer patients. We do hats and make scarves for the military and we make lap robes for VITAS--a local hospice--and also we make scarves and hats for abused women and their children."

Janet Slovak mainly crochets and told me, as she lifted her work for me to admire, "This is going to be a cat snuggle for the animal shelter--so every time a cat gets adopted, they get one of these snuggle blankets. I am with the rescue group, Pet Assisted Foundation. They have been one of the longest existing animal rescues. They have been in existence since the mid-'50s. So every cat who gets adopted gets a gift package with a snuggle blanket, cat toys, literature, etc."

Gail emphasized that the group is filled with people who learn from each other. What one person might not know, another person might. Truly these people learn and teach each other as the knowledge in their handcrafted skill grows.

Ava Marshall mentioned that she has been coming to the group for a couple of years and she does just about everything,

units, scarves for the military, and blankets and hats for Millers Children's Hospital, as well as items for the animal shelters and other charitable organizations. These are busy people!

What I noticed about this welcoming Torrance group is the incredible admiration each has for the other. Not one person hesitated bragging about the other. These are open,

giving, generous people who enjoy each other's company and give the fruit of their love to others.

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Sue Wilson, Mary Kahler, and Gail Van Vranken.



Scarf for abused women's shelter.