



Pat Smith (left) and Emmy Caverly make puzzles in all shapes and sizes in the basements of their Livonia and Southfield homes. The puzzles, like the Christmas puzzle (above) that forms a Nativity scene, are designed for preschool youngsters.

## Pieces fall together for puzzle makers

By Mary Klemie  
staff writer

Operating their own business is child's play for Pat Smith and Emmy Caverly.

As the founders and only employees of their venture, Cellar Workshops, the two sisters happily — and successfully — have been making original wooden puzzles for youngsters for 1½ years.

The puzzles are designed to challenge as well as entertain pre-school children, said Smith and Caverly, who have 10 grandchildren between them.

"Our idea is play time," said Caverly, a Southfield resident. "The puzzles will give lots and lots of play time to the kids."

BOTH SMITH and Caverly design and manufacture the puzzles in the basements of their homes, which led them to name their business "Cellar Workshops." Smith warns a visitor that she doesn't always hear the phone because "band saws and sanders make a lot of noise."

A menagerie of puzzle pieces covered a table in Smith's Livonia home recently as Smith and Caverly described their unusual works to a visitor. The scene reminded one of Santa's workshop.

The sisters' puzzles come in all shapes and sizes. Each lightweight piece, carved from smooth, hard basswood and colored brightly with non-toxic paints, stands up on its own and could be a toy in itself.

"The child can use his own imagination," Caverly said. "They're for imaginative play. A lot of children will take the shapes and line them up and push them along like a train. Whatever strikes their fancy."

SEVERAL OF the puzzles fit into a round frame and can be hung on the wall in a child's room. Others are made up of blocks that can be formed into several different pictures.

One puzzle, called "The Balancing Clowns," fits into a round frame, but the clown pieces out of the frame can be balanced on each other in unlimited arrangements. The shapes of another puzzle-in-the-round create a little Nativity scene. Still another puzzle, "Christmas Tree Surprise," is painted on two sides: one forming a decorated tree, the other a pile of toys.

The "Table for Two" design forms a puzzle measuring six inches square, or its figures can "sit up" at the table. The fish shapes in another puzzle can be "hooked" on a string. Pieces in the "Littletown, U.S.A." puzzle resemble town buildings.

Each puzzle starts from an original, copyrighted design by Smith, who majored in art at the University of Michigan, or Caverly, who is a beginning art student.

Smith and Caverly do all the work, from cutting, planing and sanding the wood to making the boxes for the puzzles that aren't framed. The puzzles contain between five and nine pieces, depicting almost everything from animals to prehistoric creatures.

"The design is just hours of drawing," Smith said. "For the 'From the Zoo' puzzle, I bet I drew 100 animals before I got enough to work together properly."

SMITH AND Caverly make the puzzles for children between the ages of 2 and 7. They often try the works out on their own grandchildren.

"They're geared to the preschool child," Smith said. "They'll all enjoy any one of these puzzles."

"You get from five to eight or nine pieces in each puzzle that you get," Caverly said. "And they're not difficult, so the little ones don't get frustrated. 'When children see our puzzles at fairs, their mothers say, 'Don't touch,' she continued. "But we say, 'No, they can't hurt them.'"

THE SISTERS are proud of the fact that their puzzles are handmade.

"The idea is that they're brightly colored," Smith said. "Very few people paint their puzzles."

Costs for most of the puzzles range from \$12 to \$20, with two designs priced at \$30 and \$50. They are sold at fairs and at area stores, including Country Peddler at Livonia Mall and Handcrafters Unlimited in Northville.

In addition, Smith and Caverly have some puzzles in stock and fill orders. For information call Smith at 425-1291, or write Cellar Workshops, 28255 Elmira, Livonia 48159.

"There has been a great response," Caverly said. "We've heard people say, 'Oh, here's the puzzles we saw at the fair.' We've heard real good comments from school teachers."

"They just think they're wonderful," Smith added. "And the child doesn't know they're learning while they play."

The sisters started the business as something to do after their children were grown. The two always looked for toys that would stimulate their youngsters' imagination, they said.

"We find ourselves looking for the same things for our grandchildren," Smith said.

"I still have all the puzzles we ever had," Caverly said.



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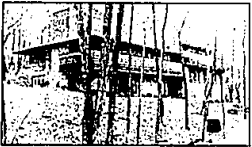
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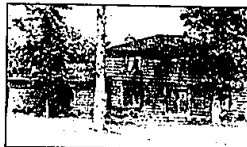
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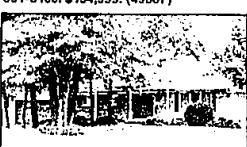
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