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Woman On The Go No Cobwebs Here

By MARGARET MILLER

One of the myriad of signs you can read in Plymouth's new Alphabet Gallery contains these words:

"The creative woman—cobwebs in her corners but not in her mind."
It pretty well sums up the

observing life

way the Gallery's five proprietors feel about the unusual shop that is their creative enterprise.

The shop at 499 S. Main is full of creative handwork, because that's what all the women love to do, and there's an emphasis on signs, because all are fascinated by words and letters.

"Some cobwebs may be there, both in the shop and at home," said Wilma Halliburton of Plymouth, one of the entrepreneurs.

"But we're really enjoying ourselves. It's something we've all had in our minds for a long time and we just decided to go ahead and try it."

"We were kind of scared, but it's worked out fine so far," added Nancy Sheehan of Livonia.

Mary Wollens of Livonia, who keeps books for the enterprise, pointed out it's been in the black for the five months of operation.

"And that," put in Linda Golbesky of Novi, "isn't bad for a store that opened at the beginning of the summer."

Elaine Hill of Plymouth is the fifth member of the Alphabet Gallery quintet.

The shop's wares are largely the work of the five women.

There are some things accepted on consignment—one such contributor is Nancy's aunt, who is in her 60s and loves to make Raggedy Ann dolls and patchwork items—but most of the things for sale are brought in by one of the proprietors. "Some weeks the shelves get kind of empty," Nancy said, "and then you know you just have to produce."

Most of the art work has a primitive and homespun flavor. That's Wilma's trademark, and the others have taken craft classes with her at one time or another.

"And this is a recycling thing," Wilma pointed out. "Half of our props and materials are throw-aways."

Notable among these are the packing crates she retrieves from behind supermarkets and the painted bench that sits outside the door.

"We found the bench on a trash pile and brought it over and painted it," Wilma said. "It's great—gives just the atmosphere we want and the kids like to sit on it while their mothers browse."

Browsing is a big thing with the Alphabet Shopp too.

"We love having people come in just to look around," Nancy said. "They get ideas and tell us about their creative projects. Sort of an old world market atmosphere."

It's fun, too, to sell something, she added. She found a real rapport with the young woman who walked out with a plaque she had lettered with a Carl Sandburg quotation.

"Life is like an onion," the plaque read. "You peel it off one layer at a time and sometimes you weep."

Those words, Nancy said, "have real meaning to me and she felt the same way."

The five women take turns minding the shop.

All in all, they agree, it's a venture full of satisfaction. As Wilma summed it up, "The whole idea is to seriously have a good time."

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MARY WOLLENS and Nancy Sheehan in their Alphabet Gallery. (Observer photo by Bob Woodring)

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