

# The Rocking Horse

## Business triples in 3 years merchandising easy-to-do hobby

By Debbie L. Sklar  
special writer

Attention users of crochet hooks, knitting needles and rug hooks — it appears that counted cross stitch is quickly becoming the "in" hobby according to a couple of local business owners.

"Believe it or not counted cross stitch is one of the easiest hobbies to learn," said Kathie Markiewicz, co-owner of The Rocking Horse Designs in Cross Street at 33245 Grand River.

"Not only is it relaxing, but the final product is something that can be cherished forever whether it's in a pillow or framed form."

In business now for three years, Markiewicz and co-owner Sara Beckman, said it all started one morning when they were sitting around the kitchen, "thinking of what to do, now that the kids went back to school."

Both women were avid cross stitchers.

The two women explained that they quickly became friends because their children were in the same class.

"It's funny because this whole thing started out as a hobby," said Markiewicz. "I just happened to mention that one of my dreams was to open a store like this."

"I said, 'boy that's always been one of my dreams too,'" said Beckman. "After we established that we went directly to our husbands. They said to investigate it, hoping to shut us up."

In September they began researching and miraculously opened three months later in downtown Farmington in the back of the former Pelican Sweater Store.

"WE DID IT really quick because we stumbled upon the space and we couldn't give it up," said Beckman. "It was a wonderful location."

Ironically the original space where they first started their business now houses an area where custom framing is completed.

"We started with only 600 square feet," said Beckman. "In February we took over the entire shop, tripling our selling space, because the woman who owned the Pelican wanted to retire so it was convenient for us to take the entire store — we were running out of space before."

"We knew that the city was trying to get more people to come to the downtown area to set up shop," said Beckman. "We've always loved the location and decided that we wanted to stay put instead of going into a strip mall."

The Rocking Horse sells all the supplies and paraphernalia needed to produce a quality counted cross stitch piece of work. They also provide custom framing for finished canvases.

Needlepoint, embroidery, crocheting and counted cross stitch. How in the world do you choose and what's the difference between all of them?

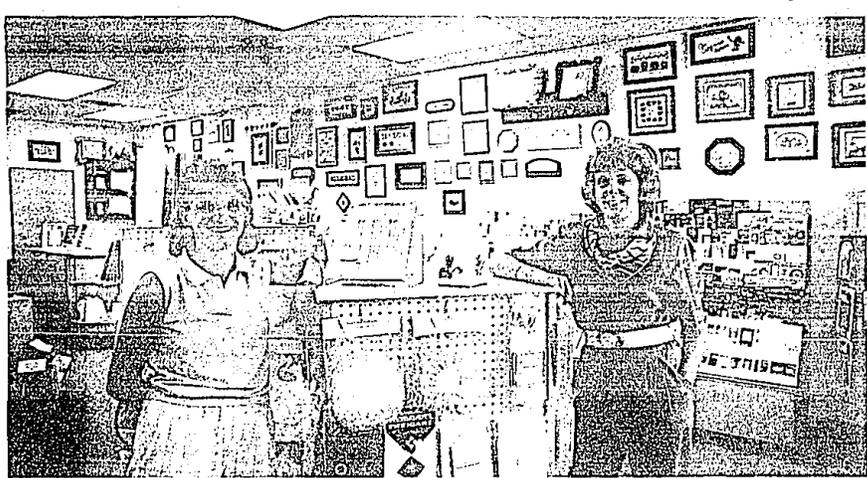
"Needlepoint is done on a canvas, where cross stitch is done on fabric," explained Beckman. "Most needlepoint canvases are already painted on and all you have to do is follow the colored picture with needlepoint thread."

"In cross stitch all you do is follow a pattern out of a book. The pattern will tell you which color threads to use for which squares, and then you do that many squares in that color on that material," said Markiewicz.

"UNFORTUNATELY most people think that it's really complicated, but in reality it's very simple."

"Yes, the holes are a lot smaller on the fabrics than in needlepoint, but if you have good eyesight you shouldn't have any problems," she said. "Sara has even taught 7-year-old Brownies."

"Plus, there are a lot of different counts of fabric, (the number of stitches you're going to have in an



Co-owners Sara Beckman and Kathie Markiewicz in the expanded area of the Rocking Horse, in downtown Farmington.

inch), so anybody can do this hobby," Beckman said.

There are basically three types of fabrics, biggest, normal, and finest. There is anywhere from 8 to 35 stitches on a given pattern, and you can buy a variety of different colored fabrics to work on. Again unlike needlepoint where there are a few hundred different types of stitch, there is only one counted cross stitch — an X.

The women agreed that counted cross stitch is less expensive than needlepoint.

"It's easier to frame, finish off and compared to a bulky needlepoint canvas, cross stitch is a lot more portable," said Markiewicz. "You also have more freedom with cross stitch. You can take a pattern and

customize it just by changing the color of the fabric."

Costs range between \$8 and \$10 for starting out with a small pattern. This would include books, fabric, and floss.

TWO PEOPLE can do the same pattern, but rarely are they going to look the same.

Beckman said the nice thing about counted cross stitch is the fact that when completed, you can do just about anything with it. "Frame it, make it into a pillow, put it on a sweatshirt, bell poles, towels, afghans, baby clothes, you name it."

"The average person who visits us is between 35-40 and is a woman, but we do have a lot of men. Men do much more intricate work, because their more detail oriented. They like

it because it's relaxing," Beckman said. "We have both working and non-working women. We don't have just housewives."

For those who are just starting out, the Rocking Horse offers a variety of classes throughout the year.

The women said what has made them successful in their business is the fact that "we treat our customers and our business the same way we would want to be treated when we walk into a store."

"We try to offer those things that we would want to buy," said Beckman.

In the beginning they said they had difficulty starting the business because they were women. "Many of the people we encountered looked at us just as two housewives who were

looking for something to do," said Markiewicz. "We were lucky because we were successful from the minute we opened. We even shocked our husbands, we were in the black the first year."

"They agreed that their sales have increased 30 percent."

"We went into this knowing it was going to be a serious venture. This is hard work and if anyone is thinking of going into business especially a woman, we suggest knowing your market, having enough money and a supportive family behind you."

"Owning and operating a business is something that you don't forget about once the clock strikes five o'clock," said Beckman. "It's difficult no doubt, but we wouldn't be doing anything else."

## Doctor wins 4 awards

When Dr. Kimberly Garver Lewis graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School this spring she was given four awards during the commencement exercises.

The Farmington Hills resident won the Janet M. Glasgow Memorial Achievement Citation, presented by the American Medical Women's Association to women who graduate with academic distinction from medical schools throughout the country.

She won the J. Robert Willson Award, given to a student for outstanding performance in obstetrics and gynecology.

She took the Roger A. Berg Prize, given to a senior medical student for

outstanding performance in radiology.

She won the Hewlett-Packard Award, which is given to the top five graduates who have excelled academically throughout the four years of their medical education.

Lewis is a graduate of North Farmington High School and Michigan State University. In 1987 she won the Ruth H. Dutton Scholarship, an award of \$1,000.

She is married to Gregory Lewis and is the mother of a two year old son and a three month old daughter.

Her parents are Gerald and Arlene Garver of Farmington Hills. Her grandmother is Lydia Woodruff of Farmington Hills.

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