

Fox Valley Knitters' Guild *NEWS*

A newsletter by and for FVKG members

November 2011

President's Letter

We went. We knit. We came home.

We went: This was my fifth Knitter's Retreat. By now, I just show up. I realized that I had not made dinner plans, but I thought that was OK, everyone has to eat; I'll find someone to tell me where to go. I didn't know what times meals were, but that's OK; I will just follow the crowd. I didn't remember who the vendor was, if we had a program or not, or even if lunch was included. I just knew if I showed up, I would have a wonderful time.

I brought a guest with me, and her questions made me aware of how little I was thinking or worrying about details. I tried to get answers for her because it seemed so important to her to know things like this.

We knit: We started new projects with wild abandon. We started projects as if all the patterns we didn't start this weekend would mysteriously disappear as if written with invisible ink. Several even started projects they just got in the gift bags. The highlight: Mary Stowe showed us her superpower – she knit while sleeping! We have pictures and witnesses. My husband is shocked and severely disappointed I didn't videotape it. He says it would have gone viral, and we would all be famous. Sorry, Mary, to deprive you of a wider audience to your super-power exhibition. It really was cool!

We came home: The room became quieter each time a carpool of day-trippers left on Saturday. On Sunday, after knitting even more, we packed up our pretties and our gifts (which were wonderful). We cleaned our munchies, and we headed home. I could almost feel sad about that, but I keep thinking that we do it all again in a year. The retreat is particularly special because all the other daily concerns are left at home (and we don't have to cook our own meals). However, the living soul of the experience is the knitting together. Luckily, we don't need a retreat center for that.

I have missed knitting with you all so much. In December, I will back. Thank you to Lorraine for wearing two hats while I have been in the woods with children. See you all soon!

~ Kathy Schooley

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2011-2012 Meeting Dates

September 14, 2011
October 12, 2011
November 9, 2011
December 14, 2011
January 11, 2012
February 8, 2012
March 14, 2012
April 11, 2012
May 9, 2012

St. Charles Episcopal Church
994 N 5th Ave.
St. Charles, IL

Time: 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

FVKG meets the second Wednesday of each month, September through May, in the Fellowship Hall of the St. Charles Episcopal Church in St. Charles, Ill. Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m.



Program Notes

It is our pleasure to have Susan Strawn as our presenter for the Nov. 9 meeting. Susan is an author, professor and knitter. She teaches courses about historical and cultural perspectives of textiles and clothing at Dominican University in River Forest, Ill. She received her PhD in textiles and clothing from Iowa State University, and wrote her dissertation on the restoration of Navajo-Churro sheep for Navajo weaving. Before entering academic life, she was an illustrator and photo-stylist for Interweave Press in Loveland, Colo. She is a frequent contributor to *PieceWork* magazine and author of *Knitting America: A Glorious History from Warm Socks to High Art* (Voyageur Press, 2007). She lives in Oak Park, Ill. During our hot, Chicago summers, Susan is fortunate to be able to escape to knit in Seattle.

See Susan Strawn's "Knitting America" presentation at the FVKG November meeting on Nov. 9.

Susan's topic for her presentation to our guild is titled "Knitting America." Through war and peace, bad times and good, Americans have knit and purled as though it were their inalienable right alongside life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In this talk, Susan will unravel the history of hand-knitting – from the first colonies in the 1600s to the present in light of economic developments, social movements and cultural trends. Illustrated with rarely seen photographs of knitters, vintage posters, advertisements and knitwear from collections across the nation, this talk is a scholar's look at a subject not given the credit it is due. Susan will also bring several copies of both her book *Knitting America* and her DVD for sale at our meeting.

~ Lorraine Tompkins

Welcome, New Members!

Sandy Antonelli
Janet Blazekovich
Kimberly Jarodsky
Teresa Kasch

Fox Valley Knitters' Guild Mission Statement

The purpose of the Fox Valley Knitters' Guild is to promote and foster an interest in knitting, to provide the opportunity for study and sharing to broaden one's skills, and to encourage high standards of design and technique in various forms of knitting.

Editor's Note

My maternal grandmother's passion was quilting, and her 13 grandchildren and some of the older great-grandchildren all got beautiful and unique hand-pieced quilts when they were born and again when they got married. Though beautifully made, these were not quilts to hang on the wall; they were used. When my brother and I were very small, our quilts were put into blanket forts, taken on car trips, and were a source of comfort when we were sick. They were well-loved and well-worn.

My grandmother has been gone for several years now, but the legacy of her gifts lives on. I still have and cherish my baby quilt. I love that I have things from her hands, made with me in mind, that represent her creatively and connect me to her.

My younger niece turns two this month. For part of her birthday gift, I'm giving her an afghan I had done for her earlier this year. Although I obviously knit instead of quilt, I like the idea of continuing the tradition my grandmother began by giving my niece something I made by hand, especially since she and her older sister were part of the reason I began knitting in the first place.

Among other things, this month's newsletter discusses traditions. The November meeting's program will focus the history of American knitting, and through this month, a local exhibit showcases a century of fiber-art traditions, which some guild members will be taking a field trip to see. Of course, there's much more, too. I hope you enjoy! As always, feel free to make suggestions about what you'd like to see in the newsletter; contact me at travelgirl8@hotmail.com.

~ Lisa Schroeder

Hospitality News

Charity

We're continuing the collecting of yarn and needles for Cook County inmates. A dedicated social worker, Jo Anne Smith, works with the prisoners, teaching them to knit and instilling pride and confidence using our favorite hobby. Please clean out your odd balls so that we can participate in this worthwhile cause.

Looking ahead: In December, we'll be collecting 7-in. x 9-in. blocks for the Warm Up America project. These blocks will be taken to Michael's to be assembled into afghans for the needy. Michaels is hosting the Warm Up America kick-off in the store at 1506 S. Randall Rd. in Geneva, Ill., on Sunday, Nov. 6 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bring your knitting or crochet, and join other crafters in creating some rectangles.

Help Desk

Bring your problems that have you stumped to the meeting. We have two amazing knitters who will be ready and able to answer all your questions.

Vendor

Lizzie's Yarn Shop of Wheaton, Ill., will display Hiya Hiya needles, hand-painted yarns and beautiful, unusual buttons. Lizzie takes cash or checks only; no credit cards will be accepted.

~ Linda Jones

Unraveling Ravelry

It Is Good To Have Friends

Hopefully, you have now befriended several knitters and guild members. Now let's start having fun together.

When you look at your notebook, one of your pages is called "**friends.**" Click on it. Now you see tabs across the right top of your **friends** page.

If you choose the **friends** tab, you will see all your cute friends – photos of them, their pets, their flowers, their books, etc. Here you can choose one of your friends and learn a bit about them – like their favorite colors and their pets and kids – and explore their projects, their favorites, their library and even their friends.

There is a tab for **friends' blogs**. If you become friends with Stepanie Pearl-McPhee (YarnHarlot) or Franklin Habit (Franklin) or Connie Chang Chinchio (changcon), you can just check your **friends' blog** pages and see their latest entries right there.

The **neighbors tab** is a fun one. Here is a list of folks from all over the world who have a similar taste in patterns. I have 28 patterns in common (projects and in our queues) with a woman in Germany and 10 patterns in common with two guild members. I became friends with a new mom in Pittsburgh with whom I had 24 patterns in common, and we even had knit some of them with the same yarn and colorways! Then you can look at what else these neighbors have knit, and it might be just the next project you were looking for.

But, the tab I have set to see when I go to my **friends** page is **friend activity**. This is a place to come everyday! Here you will see what your friends have been up to. Has *sterlingbrown99* finished another beautiful shawl? Has *gknitter* faved something that I love, too? Has *grannyjannie* been working on her Nantucket Sunset No Pearl? Is *Jods* grandson wearing a very cute Bears hat? Has *bloglesscarla* stashed a new wondrous yarn? Has *windchyme-donna* queued something cute today?

A few minutes checking out friends' activity always makes me smile. I suspect you will have fun with your friends, too.

~ Christy Becker

Gail Borden Library
270 N. Grove, Elgin, Ill.

Hours of Operation:
Mon-Thu: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.
Fri-Sat: 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Sun: 1 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

FVKG Participates in Festival of Trees

The display case at Elgin's Gail Borden Library has been decorated with colorful holiday stockings, smiling snowmen and many Christmas knits for the 11th Annual Festival of Trees to benefit the Ecker Center for Mental Health. Fantastic trees decorated by sponsors and designers will be on display until noon on Nov. 11. The beautiful creations will go to the highest bidder at the Celebration Event Nov. 12 at the Centre of Elgin. Pictures of the trees can be seen at www.FestofTreesELGIN.org, and all the photos of the FVKG display will be on the guild's website, www.FVKG.com.



Thanks to contributors Christy Becker, Kathy Gordey, Lesley Edmondson, Claudia Frost, Tammy Caltagirone and Deanne Karamanian.

The following patterns were used to create the mini Christmas knits: Twenty to Make by Sue Stratford, Mini Hat and Mitten Ornaments by Beth Morimoto from Blackberry Ridge Woolen Mill, Sophie's Toes Sock Yarn Cardigan Pattern, Felted Stocking, My Bagatelle, Knitted Holly Berry Stocking, "Road Not Taken" Scarf by Lisa Lloyd in A Fine Fleece. The large snow couple was knitted from the label pattern on Bernat Handicrafter – Holiday Prints. The guild's display can be seen until Nov. 30.



~ Claudia Frost

Tools of the Trade – Consider the Needle

I learned to sew at a young age and quickly learned that jumpers were most flattering to my blossoming 11-year-old figure. My parents gifted me with a Singer sewing machine upon high school graduation. However, that Singer never really cooperated with me (must have been a dud.) Discs would fly out while I was stitching along, and the tension was just not right. By the age of 21, I was sewing most of my own wardrobe, and my husband (yes, I married as a child!) treated me to a lovely top-of-the-line Bernina sewing machine for my 22nd birthday. From that time on, my clothing took on a whole new look. Gone were the seams with uneven tension, and in their place, beautiful stitching graced my blouses, jackets and dresses. That Singer was demoted to a dark corner in the basement, and in its place stood my miracle-working machine. To this day, many, many years later, that Bernina still turns out beautifully balanced stitches.

In the same manner, I have learned that, unfortunately, all knitting needles are not created equal. Just like a top-notch sewing machine, a top-notch knitting needle makes the difference between struggling with your knitting and enjoying every stitch you make. Have you ever struggled to pick up that next stitch? Have you ever thought that perhaps the shawl that required the k2togtbl would just have to remain in your mind rather than around your shoulders? Now, perhaps those of you who are especially nimble of finger do not have this problem. If you (and I know there are at least a few of you lurking in the ranks of the guild membership) are fleet of finger, and your knitting stitches know no bounds, well, then, you could probably create a gorgeous knitted garment out of two blunt screwdrivers and a length of twine, but for the rest of us who could use a little assistance in getting those stitches just so, then I have a suggestion to make.

Two words: Signature Needles. Well, officially, I guess it is Signature Needle Arts, so, three words. I have been conducting an unofficial survey of preferred knitting needles, and I have yet to meet anyone personally (though I confess I have read of a few on Ravelry) who would not take a pair of Signature Needles over any other brand currently out there. Signature Needles are made in the United States, specifically in Kenosha, Wis., and they are truly something to behold. (I have no affiliation with the company, other than having purchased some of their amazing products.) The stiletto tips – there are three types of tips, but the stiletto tips are the most commonly ordered – are amazing to work with. They just glide into the next stitch effortlessly.



Earlier in the summer, I was working on a KAL shawl project and was finding it very difficult to execute one of the required stitches with my run-of-the-mill needles that I didn't realize were run-of-the-mill! (I believe they were Addis, a very respectable name in knitting. I am not casting aspersions here, just opining.) I ordered a pair of Signatures and couldn't believe how much more easily those stitches jumped off my needles (OK, jumping might be a slight exaggeration, as I am definitely not known to be a fast knitter, but there was a world of difference in the ease of forming the stitch with the Signatures). The Signature needles just FEEL smoother. There is a very special finish to them. Upon perusing the website this morning, I discovered that they are aircraft-grade aluminum. Whoa!

Another cool thing about the Signature needles is that they are semi-customizable. With the circulars, you have an option of 4-, 5- or 6-inch length needles, on various circular wire lengths (20 in. to 47 in.), along with two different tip types to choose from. The straight needles have three different "cap" designs that you choose for the ends of your lovely needles (with more choices on the caps to be offered in the future), and three different tips, as well as three different lengths.

There is one teeny, tiny catch to these amazing needles (you knew there would be, right?): Ah, yes, the price! Signatures are not for the faint of heart. You might have a slight rise in blood pressure when you discover that these beauties come with a hefty price tag. They won't be arriving at your door for less than \$40 apiece, and you probably won't be able to run out to your local yarn store to pick them up or handle them in person before laying down your hard-earned money. Unless you live in Wisconsin (perhaps other select locations, but I'm not aware of any close to our area), you will have to order from the website: www.signatureneedlearts.com, or wait until next year's Stitches Midwest to see them in person. However, once you place your order and submit your payment, your new Signatures will be in your hands within a few short days. I encourage you to visit the website and drool over these beautiful needles. Since I am a newcomer to Signatures, I cannot say whether they will stand the test of time like my trusty Bernina sewing machine has done, but I am going to guess that I will be enjoying my Signatures for years to come. Aah! *(continued on p. 8)*

Show and Tell – October 2011 Meeting

Every guild meeting, we have Show and Tell as an opportunity for our members to display and discuss projects they have completed. Here is a selection of items featured at the October meeting. Information on the pieces is included if it was available. To see additional projects from this meeting, please visit the photo gallery at www.fvkg.com.



Pattern: Silk Garden Scarf / Necklace
by Irina Poludneko
Yarn: Noro Silk Garden Lite
Knitter: Jennifer Duncan



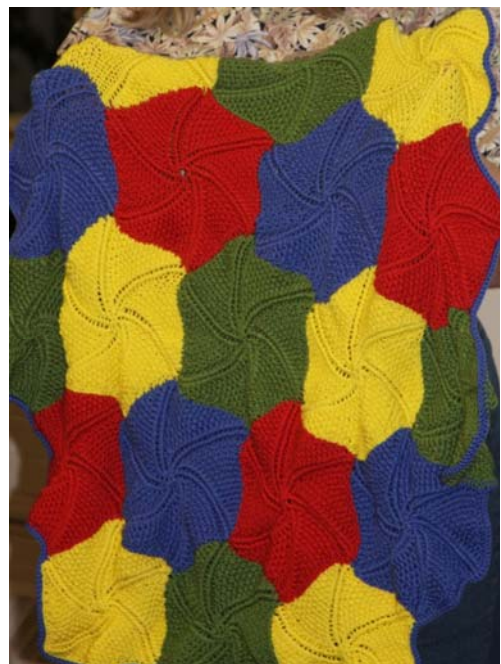
Pattern: Karen Shawl
Yarn: Koigu
Knitter: Christy Becker



Pattern: Tank Top in One Skein
by Leigh Rasford
Yarn: Lorna's Laces Helen's Lace
Knitter: Jan Krueger



Pattern: Summer Flies
Knitter: Emily Parsons



Pattern: Swirl by Nora Gaughan
Yarn: Berroco Comfort
Knitter: Ruth Dykstra

Show and Tell – October 2011 Meeting



Pattern: Wurm
Knitter: Marianne Moye



Knitter: Tammy Caltagirone



Pattern: Mini hat and mitten ornaments by Beth Morimoto
Knitter: Claudia Frost



Frequently, members want to know what pattern or yarn was used for these projects. We would like to include that information both on the website and in the newsletter. To help gather the pertinent details, a form for Show and Tell is available at the welcome table for you to complete for any item(s) you wish to show at the guild meeting.

Reminder:

At the December meeting (12/14), there will not be a speaker or vendor; it's the FVKG holiday party and members' sale, where members can bring their own yarn that they want to sell.

The Ellwood House Museum in De Kalb, Ill., is hosting "Threads of Tradition." It features knitting, crochet, quilting and embroidery dating from the 1830s-1930s. The exhibit is open now through Nov. 20. For further information, see its website: www.ellwoodhouse.org.

~ Lorraine Tompkins

Guild Meeting Agenda

6:00 p.m. Set up
6:30 p.m. Gather to knit
7:00 p.m. Meeting begins:
 Introduce new members/guests
 Announcements/reports
 Show and Tell
 Door prizes

7:30 p.m. Break
7:45 p.m. Program
9:00 p.m. Lights out

2011-2012 FVKG Board Members

President: Kathy Schooley
VP and Website: Lorraine Tompkins
Secretary: Jennifer Duncan
Treasurer: Deanne Karamanian
Hospitality: Tammy Caltagirone; Linda Jones
Membership: Marge Clark
Newsletter Editor: Lisa Schroeder
Gallery Show: Claudia Frost
Library: Barbara Palmer

Upcoming Regional Fiber Events

Nov. 4, 6:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Nov. 5-7, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Fine Art of Fiber – Showcase of Fiber Arts

Chicago Botanic Garden

Glencoe, Ill.

www.chicagobotanic.org

Nov. 5

Fall Fiber Festival

Hopkins, Minn.

www.uppermidwestalpacas.com

Nov. 10-13

Midwest Men's Knitting Retreat

Kalamazoo, Mich./Delton, Mich.

www.mensknittingretreat.com

Nov. 11, 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Nov. 12, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

26th Annual Fiber Art Show and Sale

Bloomington, Ind.

www.bloomspinweave.org

Dec. 2-3

Arkansas Fiberarts Extravaganza

Hot Springs, Ark.

www.arfiberartsextravaganza.com

Tools of the Trade – Consider the Needle

(Continued from p. 5)

P.S. If you just can't see your way to spending more than \$40 for a pair of knitting needles, give a thought to trying ChiaoGoo (pronounced "chau gu") Red Lace needles. The tips are pretty tapered, and the joins are amazing. Best part: You can get them home for less than \$10 per pair. Go to www.chiaogoo.com to find out where you can purchase them. (Again, I am not an employee or owner of this company, just a happy consumer.)

Happy Knitting!

~ Janet Goier

Special Yarn Shops

These shops are special because they offer discounts to FVKG members

Esther's Place

201 W. Galena St. (Route 30), Big Rock
630-556-WOOL (9665)
www.esthersplacefibers.com

Fine Line

6N158 Crane Road, St. Charles
630-584-9443
www.finelineca.org

Fishbed Knitting Emporium, Inc.

320 N. River Street, East Dundee
847-844-YARN (9276)

The Fold

3316 Millstream Road, Marengo
815-568-5320

Gene Ann's Shop

117 East Station St., Barrington
847-842-9321
www.geneannsyarns.com

Knitche

5150-B Main Street, Downers Grove
630-852-5648
<http://knitche.com/>

Loopy Yarns

47 West Polk St., Chicago
312-583-9276
www.loopyyarns.com

Needle Things

426 South Third Street, Geneva
630-232-9915

Never Enough Knitting

119-121 North Main, Wheaton
630-221-1007

Stitches in Time

300 W. Washington, Oregon
815-732-4599

*Wool and Company

107A West Main Street, St. Charles
630-444-0480
www.woolandcompany.net

*Wool and Company has switched to a Stash Cash card program instead of a traditional discount.

Ellwood House Road Trip



On Friday, Nov. 18, a trip is being planned to see the "Threads of Tradition" exhibit at the Ellwood House Museum in DeKalb, Ill. (see p. 8 for additional information). The exhibit is open from 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. The mansion tour is offered at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. The cost is \$8.

Before going to the exhibit, we would like to visit the The Yarn Exchange and then find a place for lunch. The Yarn Exchange, at 134 E. Lincoln Hwy, DeKalb, 815-787-9276 (Rt. 38, just at the railroad tracks), is a large, very interesting yarn shop. It is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Fridays. There are several interesting restaurants near the shop. (An hour in the shop, an hour for lunch, plus a 10-minute drive to Ellwood House, plus 10 minutes for any other logistics or unforeseen events??)

After that, we would drive to Ellwood House, 509 N. First St., 815-756-4609, to see the exhibit and tour the mansion.

If you are interested in joining our DeKalb field-trip group, please e-mail Claudia Frost at cfinspirations@aol.com, or call 630-772-0109. Or sign up at the next guild meeting. If you are driving yourself, we will meet at the Yarn Exchange at 10 a.m., or we can meet at the Rt. 38 Meijer parking lot, far northeast section, and carpool at 9:15 a.m.

~ Claudia Frost and Barb Palmer

Member Spotlight: *Linda Jones*

When, where, how and why did you become a knitter?

I learned to knit as a young child (probably about 6 years old). My favorite aunt, who was also my godmother, taught me, and I've been knitting off and on ever since.

English or Continental? Circulars or Straights?

English. Straight needles, except for hats when I use circulars

Tell a little about your family and pets and other hobbies if you would like.

I'm married with two grown "kidlets," one toddler granddaughter and another granddaughter due in February.

What is your favorite knitting book? Or favorite item you have knit? Or both?

I like making vests and afghans, and I loved Sally Melville's visit in April. She's inspired me to look for similar tones in my stash and do more mixing of colors.

Who would play you in the movie version of your life?

Phyllis Diller – I'm pretty silly!

What is an interesting factoid about you?

I'm a children's cooking and craft instructor for a number of park districts.

What are you currently knitting?

A baby afghan, a baby hat, sock o' riffic shawl, minimalist cardigan, baby headband, etc. (yes, more than 12 things on needles – yikes!)

Anything else you'd like members to know about you?

Doing Hospitality with Tammy is great fun!

Member Spotlight: *Tammy Caltagirone*

When, where, how and why did you become a knitter?

My first foray into knitting began the summer of 2006 with a quick, down and dirty lesson at the Argyle Mill as the result of cajoling from Kristi Langhus, one of the mill's owners. She thought my crocheting was "cute" but asked when I was going to get serious about it. In January 2007, I signed up for the knitting 101 class at Wool & Co., and the rest is history. I like having a portable craft, and knitting fills the bill quite nicely.

Circulars or Straights? English or Continental?

Circulars almost always. Typically, I knit Continental. I tried English, but Continental allows me to hold the yarn the way I crochet and seems more natural to me. Unless, of course, I'm knitting with two colors, then I do a bit of both.

Tell a little about your family and pets and other hobbies if you would like.

I'm married to a high-school social studies teacher; we have two daughters, ages 25 and 20, and a son, 7. Last year, we moved my grandma up from Texas to live with the three of us (hubby, son, me). We're sporting two dogs, a cat, a turtle and a micro-flock of six chickens. I'm a third-generation sewer/crafter. I'm into cooking and photography (I always have a camera of some sort with me). We love camping and do as much of it as possible. No groaning, please, we hardly "rough it." Tent glamping is way more our style, with lots of fluffy stuff to sleep on and good food to eat.

What is your favorite knitting book? Or favorite item you have knit? Or both?

I can't say that I have a favorite knitting book; my likes change with the wind.

Who would play you in the movie version of your life?

Melissa McCarthy from *Mike & Molly* would have to be my movie me.

What is an interesting factoid about you?

Although I've spent the last 10 years as a legal secretary, I am a former radar technician in the U.S. Air Force. Who knew I had a logical side?

What are you currently knitting?

Currently, I am working on a Christmas stocking for my youngest daughter, who is security forces for the U.S. Air Force and stationed in South Carolina.

Anything else you'd like members to know about you?

I'm new to FVKG, but I'm looking forward to meeting the members and expanding my knitting abilities. I can be found on Ravelry (TammyCaltagirone) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/caltagirone).

