

Beauknits Ltd. Yarn Shop Receives 2010 Spirit of Cohoes Award

11 Feb 2010

by: Paul Quirini



It's only fitting that a yarn shop owned by a woman who's synonymous with the Spindle City has been selected to receive the 2010 Spirit of Cohoes Award.

Beauknits Ltd. Yarn Shop, owned by Barbara Hildreth, is the recipient of the award, which is presented by the Chamber's Business Council of Cohoes to a Cohoes-based business that embodies the "community that cares" in support of its employees and Tech Valley.

The award is bestowed upon an organization that shows its commitment to the spindle city through its community involvement.

"I'm still in awe to receive this award," Hildreth said. "It's amazing and I'm thrilled. Cohoes means a lot to me, so anything that brings good publicity to Cohoes and downtown is a blessing."

Beauknits received the Spirit of Cohoes Award on February 11 during Mayor John McDonald's state of the city address at Van Schaick Island Country Club.

A retired school administrator, Hildreth opened Beauknits in 2004 with her friend, Pat Sweeney, naming their shop after the Beaunit Spinning Mill that played an active role in Cohoes' economy from 1933-53.

"I wanted to continue doing what I was doing in school — teaching, caring and being there for others," Hildreth said.

Beauknits promotes the sale of good fibers and notions for fiber artists. In doing so, the shop has developed a relationship with its customers that promotes the Zen of knitting and crocheting, and the support of new friends at its many knitting circles.

"I really encourage people with a stressful life to take time to knit — 15 minutes before work, and 15 minutes after work," Hildreth said. "It really reinforces you as a person. That's what I did when I was a principal."

Beauknits prides itself on excellent products at affordable prices with full support and instruction.

"Our customers are key to us, and providing them with an environment where they can learn knitting and crocheting is critical," Hildreth said.

The shop conducts classes every Saturday and some Thursdays, taught by its talented customers. There are also two groups of fiber artists that gather each week on Wednesdays and Fridays to assist one another with techniques and challenging patterns.

Four years ago, several local shops, including Beauknits, collaborated to form Yarn Shops of Tech Valley in order to better support their customers.

"We encourage shopping locally," Hildreth said. "If somebody calls me and I don't have a brand of yarn, I'll send them to my competitors. I don't want our customers ordering online or from a catalog. I want to keep them buying locally."

The group also has sponsored Yarn Crawls, Knit-Ins, trips to the New York State Sheep and Wool Show, and a Knit and Fiber Festival on March 21 at The Arts Center of the Capital Region in Troy.

Since its founding, Beauknits has encouraged its knitters to share their time and talent with others. Many knitters clean out their stashes and bring in yarns, needles and patterns that they no longer need; as a result, Beauknits has donated nearly \$1,000 in goods to the Cohoes Community

Center. In addition, the shop regularly distributes yarn and needles to the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Cohoes Seniors, the Sisters of Charity and the knitting group at Cohoes Middle School.

Beauknits also selects monthly charities for whom to knit. Currently, knitters are making dressy scarves for Dress for Success, and every November and December, knitters make hats, mittens and scarves for the Cohoes City School District. Throughout the year, shawls are sent to The Eddy, and lap robes are given to the VA Hospital, with countless baby hats and blankets sent to local maternity hospitals.

Hildreth is proud of her city and humbled that Beauknits has been named as the recipient of the 2010 Spirit of Cohoes Award.

“Owning and operating Beauknits with my close friend, Pat Sweeney, has been an exciting and fulfilling experience for us, and I believe we have greatly impacted our city and community,” she said.