

Fox Valley Knitters' Guild *NEWS*

A newsletter by and for FVKG members

December 2011

President's Letter

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, my mother asked, "Do you think knitting will survive? Do you think it is too complicated for the simple-minded people the world is producing these days?" (Yes, my mother is a bit eccentric.) I fought the urge to argue that the world was not destined to be filled with dumb people, because sometimes I do agree with her on that. I also fought the urge to cry, "Knitting will never die! It is the most wonderful craft experience in the universe!" Instead, I thought a bit and tried to answer the good question intelligently.

I explained that although there is plenty to learn and make with knitting, it really isn't that hard – it is, after all, made of just two stitches – unlike crochet (she crochets), which has too many for me to remember. "See," I said, pulling out a shawl pattern beside me, "K2 is knit two stitches, and then K1tbl, well, that is just knitting the stitch a different way, and then yo, which is, OK, that is sort of a different stitch, but not hard, and then M1, which is an increase, and see, then just K2 again. See, it is not really hard." I could tell that she wasn't convinced.

I continued explaining that historically and currently children learn to knit. Then I launched into a mini lecture about stocking knitting by the entire family in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. She had heard enough. (Perhaps I am a bit eccentric, too.)

I kept thinking about this all weekend. We get asked, "Is it hard?" nearly every time we KIP. I don't want to scare off potential knitters, but I also don't want to devalue the skills we have worked hard to acquire. I love what Elizabeth Zimmermann said, "Really, all you need to become a good knitter are wool, needles, hands, and slightly below-average intelligence. Of course, superior intelligence, such as yours and mine, is an advantage." (*Knitting Without Tears*, p. 11)

The Yarn Harlot's new book (*All Wound Up*) has a wonderful essay about the cultural context of knitting, called "Losing Ground." She compares knitting back then to driving today – they both are complicated skills that society expected everyone to master because it is just part of making your life work. The light really went on for me with that essay. In the end, I think back to a game box from my childhood that it read: A minute to learn, a lifetime to master. I think that applies to knitting as well.

~ 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.



Holiday Party

The focus of the December meeting (12/14) is to take a break from the busy demands of the season, and relax and celebrate with our knitter friends. There is no official program for December, so we'll have lots of time to work on our holiday knitting, noshing and visiting with friends. Also, we'll be having our "Garage Sale," where some will be making room for new things, and some will be finding things they just can't live without ...

Garage Sale of Stash and Stuff

Bring your extra yarns, books, needles and other supplies for your fellow guild members to buy. Bag up yarns, preferably in clear bags. Label all items with your name and your price. We'll have lots of tables filled with things for sale. Both as seller and buyer, it's a good idea to bring small bills and some change to make the transactions easy. This is an opportunity for some of us to clean out a few things and others of us to add to our collection.

~ Lorraine Tompkins

Welcome, New Members!

Jeanette Baker
Linda Daniels
Debi Estopellan
Mary Ryan

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.

Vendor of the Month

The Vendor of the Month for December is you! All guild members who have something to sell are invited to bring their wares to sell at the December gathering. This means, of course, that you can package up some yarn from your stash that you are willing to part with, but it also means that this is your opportunity to let your fellow guild members purchase your creations. Some of our members own a yarn store or dye fabulous yarn, and they will hopefully bring some goodies to help you stuff your Christmas stockings. But, many of our members create things and can sell them. We hope to see all kinds of creations – ornaments, decorations, bookmarks and patterns. Please bring your merchandise priced and ready to sell.

~ Christy Becker

Editor's Note

Season's greetings, fellow knitters. Here's wishing you and your families a joyous holiday season! May your celebrations be festive and your stress levels low, may your knitting needles fly and projects complete magically well, may your Christmas stockings overflow with oodles of yarn and notions and more, and may the New Year bring you ample time to knit!

Happy Holidays!

~ Lisa Schroeder

Hospitality News

Hospitality

This marvelous season is highlighted by good friends and good food. And we know knitters are wonderful cooks, so let's enjoy this holiday party by bringing an appetizer or dessert to share. Also, please bring your own drink (water, soda, fruit juice, etc.). The guild will provide cups and ice.

Charity Spotlight

Please bring your 7" X 9" blocks for Warm Up America. These will be delivered to Michael's where they'll be joined together to form afghans for local charities.

This month, we'll also be supporting Hesed House (a homeless shelter in Aurora). St. Charles Episcopal Church is collecting the following: hats, underwear (basic white Fruit of the Loom or Hanes), gloves and athletic socks.

Finally, Jo Anne Smith, who teaches knitting to inmates at the Cook County Jail, is very grateful for all of the supplies we have sent her. Her stash is large now, and she's requested that we hold off sending her anything for awhile. We'll check back with her in the future to assess her needs.

~ Linda Jones

Knitting in Far Away Places

I just returned home from a 1,300-mile journey by rivers and lakes from Moscow to St. Petersburg, Russia, and three days in Helsinki, Finland. While in Russia, I looked for signs of knitting in the market places, GUM (Russia's largest department store), booths, souvenir stalls, on the streets, in monasteries and churches, and in local stores, but, alas, no signs of knitting in this cold climate, although I did see plenty of fur hats and coats. Also beautifully embroidered articles and lace were abundant for very high prices in tablecloths, runners, blouses and skirts, especially at the artist colony in Mandrogy – still no knitted goods.

Our program guide told us that most of Russia's crafts are made from wood, as it is a plentiful natural resource, such as birch and pine trees. So you see beautifully hand-painted boxes that can cost thousands of dollars, as well as bowls and spoons, nesting dolls, birds, music boxes and much more.

My daughter and I then took a high-speed train to Helsinki, Finland, for a three-day extension, and right away, we saw ladies knitting and selling their wares in the outside marketplace. Their knit wear was beautiful, and the cold did not keep them from their knitting, just like true knitters everywhere. They were very friendly and allowed me to take their pictures to share with you ...



~ Jane Batte

Ellwood Mansion Field Trip

We were powered by the wind on our trip to see the Ellwood Mansion in DeKalb on Nov. 18. A small group of FVKG members spent a long time at the Yarn Exchange Shop before heading to the Lincoln Inn for a tasty lunch. Jane Batte sifted through an enormous button jar, while Mary Gregory, Barb Palmer and Claudia Frost enjoyed all the yarn and color choices before making their selections. (Be sure to ask them about their new knitting projects.) Phyllis Deerinck joined the group for lunch (and, I suspect, took a trip back to the yarn store and bead shop before returning home), and then we all headed over to the magnificent Ellwood Mansion to catch up with Eileen Hoesly.

The hour tour gave us a chance to view all four floors, from the grand dining room to the domestic work spaces. We marveled at the crystal chandeliers, antiques woodwork, original furnishings and three story spiral staircase. Our docent provided many interesting stories about Isaac Ellwood, Illinois king of the barbed wire, and his family. We were all taken back to the Gilded Age, Victorian times and customs. At the end of our outing we toured a special exhibit of historic needlework and quilts at the visitors center. Then it was one more stop to check out Crackerjax, an eclectic store on Third Street.

In the future, if you have a special place to visit and tour, please share your ideas. A field trip is a wonderful way to get to know FVKG members and see new places and things, sometimes right in your own backyard.

~ Claudia Frost, FVKG Gallery Show Chair



Mary Gregory and Barb Palmer (FVKG librarian) are pleased with their treasures.



Jane Batte sifts through the enormous Yarn Exchange button jar.



Phyllis Deerinck and Claudia Frost enjoy the generous menu treats offered at the Lincoln Inn, an old-fashioned main street diner.

Let's Knit Together

Judy Jasper and Phyllis Deerinck want to start a Fair Isle knitalong. Our first meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. at Arcadium in St. Charles on Jan. 19. Bring books, projects you've been afraid to start, yarn looking for a pattern and a little *chutzpa*.

~ Phyllis Deerinck

Yarns I Have Known and Drooled Over

There is nothing more wonderful than picking up your needles and using them to work with yarn so wonderful you are in a state of total bliss just touching it. Hopefully, most of you know what I am talking about! I recently ran into a fellow FVKG member (Marge, this means you!) at Wool & Company, where I was guiltily walking my latest unnecessary yarn purchase to the cash register, and I showed her what I had in my hand. (More about that later.) She confessed that she owned some of that particular yarn as well, and told me that she kept it in a special basket near her chair just to pet it whenever she felt the need! Well, I think that all of us should have some yarn that is just so wonderful to feel we must pet it from time to time. And what a great idea as well – to keep some yarn next to our favorite knitting chair just for petting purposes! In our modern world of stress and strife, isn't it nice to know that we have relief close at hand?



Thankfully, there are many, many lovely skeins of yarn that qualify as “pettable,” and thanks to the wonderful world of the Internet, if those skeins are not locally available, we can have those skeins on their way to our doorstep with very little effort. I would like to tell you about a few of my favorites, and would love to hear about yours. A recent discovery for me was the brand Jill Draper Makes Stuff. I purchased mine in “Aurora,” a lace weight, delightful blend of 70% wool and 30% silk, with one skein having 460 yards, the perfect amount for a small shawl or scarf. My note to myself on my Ravelry stash page is “feels like heaven,” and it certainly does make one think of clouds and harps and peaceful hours of knitting. Jill Draper produces her yarn in Kingston, N.Y., and www.jilldraper.com will take you to her Etsy shop; you can also check out this yarn at our own LYS, Wool & Company, in St. Charles, if you are into instant gratification like some of us are.

My next sinful indulgence is “Breathless” from Shalimar Yarns. This yummy blend of 75% superwash merino/25% cashmere/10% silk comes in 420-yard skeins, and a lovely array of colors, from my favorite greens, to purples, to blues, to everything in between. Check out Wool & Company or the Shalimar webpage at www.shalimaryarns.com to read more and see the beautiful colors.

When it comes to beautiful, soft, squishiness, another lovely choice is Dream in Color’s “Smoochy” sock yarn with cashmere. It is 400 yards of 70% superwash merino/20% cashmere/10% nylon, and also has a beautiful choice of colors. Visit its website at www.dreamincoloryarn.com, or take a drive to Wool & Company to smooch some yourself.

Another fab-to-the-touch yarn is Sophie’s Toes Sock Yarn, a gorgeous 80% merino/10% cashmere combo. I picked up several skeins (385 yards each) at the October FVKG meeting and fell in love. Not only are the hand-dyed colors, well, to die for, but the hand of the yarn is quite wonderful. Visit www.emilyparson.etsy.com to see for yourself.

I would be remiss not to mention the lovely “Gaia Lace” from The Sanguine Gryphon (www.sanguinegryphon.com). This is a gorgeous blend of 40% cashmere/60% silk, and comes in 420-yard skeins. The Sanguine Gryphon will soon be closing, to be re-organized into two new companies, Cephalopod Yarns, based in Baltimore, and The Verdant Gryphon, based in Easton, Md., but I strongly urge you to check out all of their products, no matter what name they call themselves. Such beautiful yarn to work with!

And, finally, after ‘lovely’, there is “Heavenly Father, I believe I have died and gone to heaven.” And my final suggestion definitely falls into that category, and is the yarn that Marge also swooned over – my particular find is the 437-yard, “Sea Sock” blend of 51% silk/29% superwash merino/20% seacell, offered by a Canadian company called Hand Maiden Fine Yarn. What is seacell, you ask? It is fiber spun from seaweed! I don’t care what it is, all I can tell you is that it is some of the most “pettable” yarn I have ever had the pleasure to hold. And the colors are absolutely dreamy. Next time you are in St. Charles, stop by Wool & Company and ask if they have any of this amazing yarn left on the shelves. If there is none, take a trip via the Internet to www.handmaiden.ca to see a little bit of what I am talking about. You won’t be sorry. Your husband might want to come to my house to have a word or two about the price of your latest purchase. Just remind him that yarn therapy is less per hour than that other kind of therapy, or send him my way, and I’ll be happy to remind him for you.

Happy Knitting!

~Janet Goier

This Month in Ravelry: It's All about the Yarn!

Maybe you have fallen in love with a project and a yarn, and the yarn is no longer available at your local yarn shop. Maybe you are oh-so-close to being done with your project, and you have run out of yarn, and there is no more to be found. Maybe you know exactly what you want to knit, but the pattern was written for a yarn that is now discontinued. Oh, what to do? Ravelry, of course.

Do you remember back at our October meeting, Sandy Staples showed some cute baby hats, but said that the yarn was discontinued and that she had bought all the yarn that Wool and Company had left? Ravelry to the rescue!

Go to the YARN tab, and type the name of the yarn into the Search Box. Sandy's yarn was called Cha Cha. Several options appeared, and Sandy's was the one by Trendsetter.

There is a tab called BUYING OPTIONS. Click on it, and you will see online sites and local stores that have the yarn you are looking for. Jimmy Beans Wool was one of the options, and in checking the website, they showed each of the colors and the number of balls of each color that they had left.

What if you wanted to knit Stephanie Pearl McFee's Unoriginal Hat? It was designed to use Blue Moon Fiber Arts Leticia. But alas, there are no buying options listed because it is discontinued and just not hanging around any yarn shops. A great option for these kinds of hunts or just if you are hunting for a bargain is to click on STASHES. The number before it is the number of people who have admitted that they have some happily stored in their closet. Now you will see all the beautiful yarn starting with folks who are willing to trade or sell their skein(s). You can click on one that you are interested in and read the notes that will tell you the price. If you want to buy something, simply click on the person's name and then click on SEND MESSAGE. Then you can write an email to say you would like to buy their yarn and work out the payment details.

As I type this, there is only one skein of Leticia that states WILL TRADE OR SELL. It might not be the colorway you are seeking, or I may have already bought it, so here is what to do when you want to knit a pattern and the yarn has been discontinued, or in those rare moments when you decide you would like to knit it with something from your stash.

Go to PATTERNS, and search UNORIGINAL HAT. Go to UNORIGINAL HAT, and click on the tab YARN IDEAS. In this case, it will show you more than 25 different yarns and how many unoriginal hats were knit out of each one. If you choose Malabrigo Chunky, it will show you all the Unoriginal Hats that were knit out of it, and you can check out the notes to find out if any modifications were required because of the different yarn. Check back next month for information about helpful notes.

If you are desperate to find a bit of yarn that you need to finish a project, hunt through all the folks who have your color in their stash – even the ones who didn't say they would like to sell it. You can send them a message to tell them your dire situation and see if they could spare a bit. You can even compare dye lots. Yes, I have helped a few folks destash a bit. I was hunting for a different color of Miss Babs Yummy yarn, since the two that I had bought at Midwest Fiber and Folk Festival to knit the Daybreak Shawl just were not knitting up the way I had envisioned. I found some great Miss Babs yarn currently residing in California. So, after a few emails, the yarn moved out of her stash and into mine. The yarn was everything I expected when it arrived. I actually bought two different colorways. I love it, and I got a good deal, too!

Alas, it didn't quite work with my Daybreak main color already on the needles. The good news is that I now have other projects planned to knit with it, and I found some koigu in my own stash that was just what my shawl needed. And, I even added the person I bought the yarn from as a FRIEND in Ravelry since we had similar tastes in yarn and patterns. Happy Yarn Hunting!

~ Christy Becker



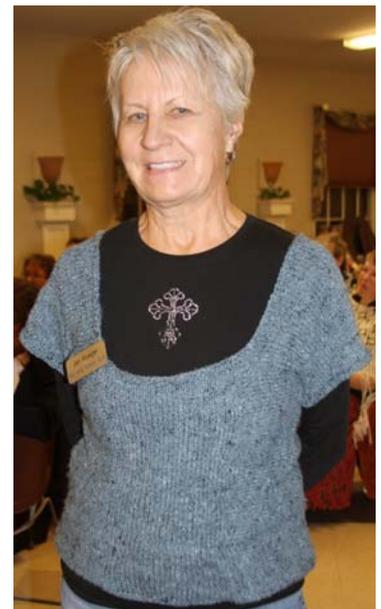
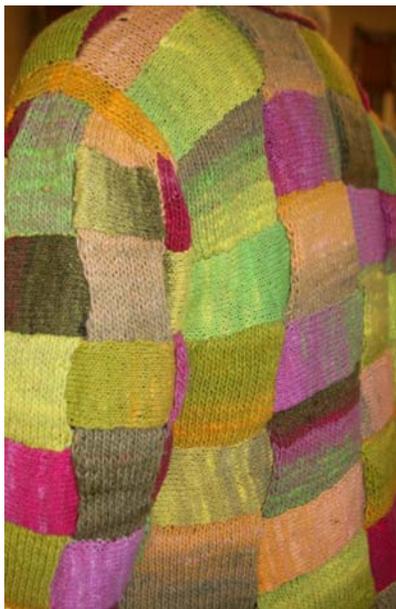
The original plan.



Miss Babs Yummy, bought from a stash on Ravelry.

Show and Tell – November 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 November meeting. To see other inspiring projects from this meeting, please visit the photo gallery at www.fvkg.com.



Holiday Show and Tell

Please bring your finished and in-progress Christmas gifts, ornaments and decorations to the December meeting to inspire and motivate the rest of us. Your fellow knitters will really appreciate the pattern and yarn names!

~ Christy Becker

Program Notes: Coming Attractions at the FVKG January Meeting (1/12)

Starting and Stopping: Going Tubular

New knitters are sometimes surprised to learn that there are many ways to cast on and bind off their knitting – and more experienced knitters may be, also. We often have our favorite cast-ons and bind-offs, and even if we know there are others, we fall back on the tried and true.

With January comes the New Year, and this is a perfect time to try something new with our knitting. We will take a look at a beautiful and very stretchy way to start and end knitting, especially great for ribbing at the hem, neck and sleeves of a sweater, the cuffs of mitten or gloves and the ribbed edge of socks and hats.

Let's learn (or re-learn) the tubular cast-on and tubular bind-off!

~ Gretl Kramer

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

Local Events

These interesting events are currently in the works:

Natasha Lehrer has two pieces in the "neXt gallery" at 920 Cedar Avenue, St. Charles. The St. Charles Arts Council is featuring 35 local and regional artists, as well as emerging and student artists until Dec. 11. Call 630-429-0973, or visit its website at www.nextgallerystcharles.org.

And "Christmastime at Fine Line" members' show and sale opened Friday, Dec. 2 and continues through Sunday, Dec. 11. Visit www.fineline.org for further information.

Library Update

FVKG's book and magazine library is now on Ravelry and fully searchable. Each pattern, in each book and magazine, is easily find-able through the Ravelry search engine. Please take a look, using our FVKG Ravelry account. Also, Ravelry has an excellent three-minute video on how to use the advanced pattern search in Ravelry. Be sure to check that out, too.

To access FVKG's Ravelry library, go to www.ravelry.com. (You may have to logout of your personal account.)

USERNAME: FVKGLibrary
PASSWORD: knit\$imple

Materials can be found under My Notebook > Library. The current holdings are six books and 24 magazines, which equals 587 patterns, all fully searchable by item type, needle size, yarn, designer, etc.

The tutorial on pattern searching in Ravelry can be found at www.ravelry.com/wiki/pages/SearchHelp.

I have recruited a helper for the library, Marianne Moyer. We both will be available at meetings at the beginning, break and close for checkout.

P.S. A special thanks to Sandy Andrews, who donated the magazines.

~ Barb Palmer

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.estersplacefibers.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.*

2012 Fox Valley Knitting Guild Retreat

ARRIVAL DATE: October 26, 2012
ARRIVAL TIME: 2:00 p.m.

DEPARTURE DATE: October 28, 2012
DEPARTURE TIME: 1:00 p.m.

Room Rate: Double - \$125 per person
Single - \$205 per person

Deposit due by Jan. 11, 2012: \$50
Balance due by Sept. 12, 2012:
\$75 for a double room
\$155 for a single room

We are currently looking for members interested in being on the door prize committee. Their responsibility would be to contact various vendors to ask for donations for the retreat. Please know that if no member volunteers for this committee, there will be no door prizes for the retreat.

We once again will have massages on Friday night. Reservations will be taken, and space is limited.

Please note that once all rooms have been reserved, an amount will be announced for those wishing to attend only on Saturday, Oct. 27, 2012.

~ Sandy Andrews

Book Review

The Knitter's Guide to Hand-dyed and Variegated Yarn

Author: Lorna Miser, founder of Lorna's Laces

Suggestion #1: start at the front of this book.

OK, so this may sound a little silly, but the stitch patterns were at the back. Guess where I started? The patterns were a little interesting, but it seemed short on explanation. That would be because Lorna has pages of explanation at the beginning of the book and defines the different methods of dyeing to produce variegated yarn and how to identify them. Starting there was very interesting and helpful. Who hasn't arrived home with a skein or two of beautiful yarn only to find that they hate it when they start to knit with it? In the back of the book are both stitch patterns and projects for this yarn.

I found it at the St Charles library.

~ Christie Cunningham

Chicago Botanic Garden Fine Art of Fiber Show and Sale Highlights

For those of you who weren't able to attend the recent Fiber Arts Show and Women's Journeys in Fiber exhibit, Aprons: Myth, Memory, Fantasy, here is a taste to whet your fiber appetite for future shows. The Apron exhibit will be shown again at the Anderson Arts Center in Kenosha, Wis., from Jan. 29-Mar. 4, 2012, and at the Chicago Flower and Garden Show, Mar. 10-18, 2012. For further info, visit www.womensjourneysinfiber.com. The entire show was impressive, inspiring and a must-see event.

~ Claudia Frost, FVKG Gallery Show Chair

