

BUSINESS STYLE

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A

ll of us have days when we need relief from the daily beeping of iPhones, text messages, e-mails, the honking of horns, and the general cacophony of modern-day life. So go ahead, take a time-out. Gail Sundberg-Douse says to take this time-out at Longmont Yarn Shoppe: "Your place to unwind."

Gail, the owner of Longmont Yarn Shoppe, says she knows all about healing through peace of mind, body, and spirit on several different levels. She was a practicing nurse for 30 years, and still has a current nursing license. In September 2012, she made her longtime dream a reality and opened her own yarn shop.

"I feel as though I'm still nursing in a very different way," says Gail. "Many people who come through these doors are those who, surprisingly, just seem to want to share important parts of themselves with us. They come to not only share their need for yarn, needles, or other handwork items, but also their desire to share their lives and experiences with myself and Jane."

Jane Anderson is Gail's good friend and employee. Jane and her 10-year-old daughter, Sequoia, are at the shop often, along with Gail's daughter, Emma, who is also 10. Jane is the founder of Peace Knitters, and Gail is the founder of Loops for Love. Both of these organizations are committed to the welfare of the community, Gail explains. "We deliver crocheted and knitted items with personal notes and tags to those in homeless shelters." They include the Boulder shelter for the homeless and H.O.P.E., a homeless outreach program based in Longmont that provides encouragement and support.

Gail's love of yarn can be attributed in large part to her sister, who purchased three alpacas in 2007 and introduced Gail to alpaca yarn. Gail helped her with the fibers. They had the alpaca processed using mills in Kansas and Utah and at privately owned mills as well.

The store carries around 45 different types of yarn, Gail says. Working with the alpaca yarn is what piqued her interest in different fibers, she says. "I carry up-cycled cashmere, hand-dyed yarns, Uruguayan, Peruvian, and Brown Sheep yarns," she says. "We also carry yarns from Colorado farms." There is also a "roving bar" at the store where you can buy as much, or as little as you need by the ounce.

Gail talks about the many benefits to others that her business provides. "There is more of a sharing attitude here," Gail says. "Maybe in small part because of the cozy décor." A stroll through the wood-floored, exposed brick walls of the store does seem to set the atmosphere, with a round table with chairs and couch for people to gather, knit, and drink tea.

There are vibrant colors and varied textures of balls and skeins of yarn; handmade ceramic and wooden yarn bowls made by a local artisan; jewelry that is hand-crafted by Sequoia; and knit and crocheted items by Jane, Emma, and Gail. I sensed a feeling of warmth during my visit. It seems to radiate from the handmade knit and crocheted items that are displayed against the starkness of the rustic brick wall. All of this combines to create the

warm, cozy, and comfortable "down-home" feel you get while at the shop, Gail says.

"Handwork can be very emotional," Gail shares. "It's tactile. You think about the person for whom you are making the item while you are creating it. Knitting, crocheting, and handwork are peaceful. Every time you cross your needle or wind your yarn around a hook, it's believed that you activate both parts of your brain, and it creates a feeling of relaxation."

This activity, combined with helping other human beings, is very likely the reason behind the hats that a group of women made with the help of Gail's shop. The hats were given to indigent people in the area through a local church recently. "The idea of making something with your own hands and giving it to a person in need is a very special thing," she says.

On the third Thursday of every month from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., they host a charity handwork gathering at the store for people who do handwork. Gail encourages you to attend to connect with other like-minded and talented people, and to join in the conversation and community in a handwork circle. We get together and knit, crochet, and do all kinds of handwork for charity. This gives people a chance to connect," she says.

On the second Friday and fourth Wednesday of every month from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., they host a community handwork gathering at the shop. This is a get-together for handwork and good conversation, tea from the Tea Spot in Boulder, and snacks and refreshments, including chocolates from a local chocolatier.

There are sometimes speakers at the gatherings. And Jane provides information from time to time to the group on natural ways to stay heart-healthy. For those who do not know how to knit or crochet but would like to learn, there are classes provided for a fee by local well-known artisans such as Kris Bart, Debby Teifer, Jane, Gail, and Ava Coleman, who is a handwork historian and writer.

Ava, who teaches advanced knitting, discovered the store through her mother. Ava is well-known in the knitting and handwork community, and she writes for Piecework Magazine. "The shop is very typical of the stores in the '50s," Ava says. "It's the hominess and warmth that you get when you walk into Gail's shop that makes it different from shopping in a big box store. Gail builds camaraderie. When I first came into the store to teach, Gail said she wanted someone who taught on a national scale, but also had links to the community. I knew that I had found a home."

The store bustles in a quiet, calm way. You'll see both men and women shopping there. As Ava explains, "There are men who have done handwork throughout history. A lot of Native American men knit. Knitting by men goes back to as early as before Christ."

You might want to make a trip to Longmont and drop into the store at 454 Main Street (the rear unit.) You may want to buy some special yarn, hooks, needles, tea, or chocolate or just hang out for awhile. Find out about the classes, events, and the children's summer camps that are coming this summer at www.longmontyarn.com.

LONGMONT YARN SHOPPE

By Geri Gingras-Barela



Employee Jane Anderson, Owner Gail Sundberg-Douse, and her daughter, Emma

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