



Ester Szalay, Pat Kovach and Lanny Rashbaum along with Carol Blankman, Elaine Griver, Ruthann Foreman and Pat Mullen are part of The Dorchester Knitters.

A Close-Knit Group

Dorchester Knitters provide more than just handmade crafts

by Kaydee Tuff

THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER AND THE SOFT ticking of knitting needles fill the Dorchester Community Room every Tuesday afternoon, as strands of colored yarn are transformed into gifts of love.

“When I retired, I thought I’d try something completely new so I was going to learn how to be a dog groomer,” explains group founder Carol Blankman. “When I told my friend, she thought it was a terrible idea. She told me, ‘Do what you know.’”

Blankman knew knitting so she posted a notice for lessons on the condo’s community bulletin board and soon The Dorchester Knitters came to life. Four years later, the size of the group varies with the sea-

son, but the results are always significant — booties and hats for newborns at the hospital, blankets for residents at The Shelter for Abused Women & Children, stocking caps for Immokalee youngsters and toys for children in foster care.

Most of the women have been knitting for years, having learned from a parent, aunt, friend or home economics class. A few are novices, hoping to learn the “ropes” from the experts.

“Well, it’s going to be a bunny,” chuckles ‘newbie’ Elaine Griver as she holds up two white yarn tubes that make up the early phase of her project. Other members look on with a laugh, knowing not every project is as successful as the photo in the instruction manual.



Pat Kovach shows off her sweater for her daughter’s chickens.

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In fact, even a pro like Blankman shared an untimely tale about a swimsuit she once knitted from cotton yarn.

“I went into the water and of course the yarn began to stretch,” she recalled, as the group broke into giggles. “I had to ask my friend bring me a towel because I couldn’t come out of the water. That’s how I learned about using cotton yarn.”

Most projects are knitted from patterns, but several are unique creations such as Pat Kovach’s chicken sweaters.

“I knitted seven of them for my daughter’s chickens,” she explains as she pulls out her phone and searches for photos. “She lives up north and my husband was worried that the chickens would get too cold.”

This season, the group created 29 blankets, 21 hats, 10 scarves and numerous other projects including two adorable knitted dresses, but their charity goes beyond their knitting needles. Each year, the Knitters and other Dorchester residents host a Christmas tree decorated with stars from The Shelter for Abused Women & Children. Each star lists a Christmas gift wish of a Shelter participant. This year, the group was mistakenly given two sets of stars for a total of 75, but thanks to the amazing support of Dorchester residents, all of the wishes were met.

“The residents here are very charitable,” Lanny Rashbaum said. “We care about our community and want to do what we can to help those in need.”

As they work, the ladies share stories, some of which pertain to knitting, but most of which recollect their lives growing up, raising families, becoming grandparents and the ups and downs of retirement. When one suffers loss of health or spouse, the others lift her up with prayer and support, knitting their lives together as the colored yarns of their handiwork.

“We have a lot of fun and we talk about everything but politics,” Rashbaum said. “We really care for each other and miss it when we can’t come. It’s a very pleasant way to spend an afternoon.” **TJ**



Ruthann Foreman displays the doll she is knitting as a children’s gift.



Eileen Lane enjoys the conversation as she works on a knitted blanket.