

Age-old craft gets contemporary look

By Cheryl Lecesse/ Staff Writer
Thursday, March 3, 2005

Amy Barrie loves getting people hooked on her products.

In fact, visitors can admire her newest design as soon as they walk in the door of her Lincoln home.

If you look down, a soft, bright-colored rug adorned with blooming flowers greets you at the door. The handmade rug, called "Flower Power," is one of the latest products in Barrie's home-based business, Lincoln Farm Design. Barrie sells rug hooking kits for a variety of home décor and personal accessories. Kits come with a color picture of the finished product, full directions, canvas and all the fibers and linings needed. Hooks and frames are sold separately.

"We're just starting to get our name out there and it's very exciting," Barrie said.

Lincoln Farm Design started about a year ago, but didn't really take off until September, when another publication featured one of its products. Barrie said she went from 300-400 hits on her Web site a day to about 18,000 after the article was published.

The article not only increased her customers, but also prompted several yarn stores to call her, asking if she would like to teach classes at their locations. In addition, one of Barrie's rugs will be featured in the upcoming WGBH Auction.

"It's really easy, it's really fun," Barrie said, saying most knitters and needlepointers would enjoy rug hooking.

After taking a rug hooking class, Barrie said she fell in love with it. But when she went to look for more contemporary designs for projects, she found nothing.

"I took a class and I loved it, and I wanted to do another project," she said. "All the designs I saw were totally old-fashioned."

Barrie said the rug hooking designs sold in shops were traditional patterns with chickens and flags - not Barrie's taste, she said.

"There was nothing contemporary, and so I just started to design my own," she said.

Barrie added, "That's how we really stand out from other rug hooking companies."

While traditional rug hooking relies primarily on strips of fabric, Barrie's kits use a variety of media, including chenille and ribbon.

"It just adds a little bit of zip," she said, adding her designs attempt to attract a new, younger group of people to the craft. "People really have to see the stuff to realize how cool it is and how different."

Kits come with one-ply wool, which is easier to hook with, that is hand-dyed, she said. Most of the wool she places in her kits comes from Uruguay.

"You want a high-end yarn so it will last," she said.

Available kits include different designs for handbags, purses, pillows, vests and rugs.

"We custom design things too," she said, saying she is able to sell a design but with different colors to customers.

Her most popular product is the small bag, which is just big enough to carry essentials such as keys and a cell phone.

"I think people want to try it before they invest in a big rug, to make sure they like it," Barrie added.

A technical writer by trade, Barrie used her experience in Web site design to jumpstart her business.

"I worked several months on the Web site before I thought it was good enough," she said.

Now, her business is so successful she can work it full-time from home.

"It's great because I have everything here," she said. "Every little aspect of it I love. I love ordering yarns, going to yarn shows...I love being in charge of it."

Barrie's two sons and daughter also enjoy the fact that she works from home, and she has the flexibility to attend soccer games and other activities her children are involved in.

In addition to selling kits and finished products, Barrie also teaches rug hooking classes in the area, including several at the Old Town Hall Exchange. Although Barrie's classes at the exchange have been limited, soon she plans to teach more often when the Exchange Down Under - the building's basement - is refinished.

Barrie said it was her husband Scott who pushed her to open her own business., and the two of them came up with the name "Lincoln Farm Design" during a brainstorming session.

"I didn't want to call it Rug Hooking Something," she said, saying, as an avid knitter as well, she didn't want to limit her business.

For those who have not done rug hooking, Barrie recommends they take a class before trying a kit. All kits do come with a list of detailed directions, she said.

"It's always easier to see someone do it," she said, saying, at her booth at the Deerfield Fair, many people purchased kits because they saw her demonstrations.

Barrie said she always tells people she can walk them through the process.

"It's not like knitting where you need to learn stitching and measure," she said. "If you can do one, you can do a million."

Upcoming classes are scheduled for March 13 at Newbury Yarns, Boston; March 27 at Wild and Woolly, Lexington; and April 12 at A Yarn Over Marblehead, Marblehead. Classes fill quickly and registration is required. For more information visit www.LincolnFarmDesign.com.

Photo Gallery



Amy Barrie's business, Lincoln Farm Design, is beginning to take off, generating Web hits, and requests to teach classes, as well as sales of her rug-hooking kits. (Staff photo by Karen Sparacio)