

Make Sales Happen!

Create Special Events to Attract Customers to Your Store

by Anna Lee Waite

Shop owners are always looking for new ideas and ways to improve their business so I thought it would be very interesting to contact three different shops around the country to see what they are up to. I chose shops of varying size in small towns and in large cities.

The first shop I called was Stitch By Stitch located in Cape May, New Jersey. Sharon Kraemer started off eight years ago with 300 square feet, then moved her shop to 400 square feet and is currently doing business in 800 square feet. When I asked Sharon about traffic, she reported that over 150 shoppers per day visit Stitch By Stitch! This incredible amount of traffic is due to her excellent location and the fact that Cape May is a summer resort town. Sharon and her staff work seven days a week with shop hours from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. during summer and are open 10 to 5 seven days a week January through April. Many of the visitors to her shop are from the USA, but a good number are from outside the states from as far away as France, England, and Australia. Sharon reports her shop stocks just about everything. Customers this summer seem to be going for stitching gadgets and kid's

projects. Requests for needlepoint seem to be on the increase. Never



one to just sit back and rely on the beach traffic, Sharon and company have two stitching weekends per year. Currently Stitch By Stitch is being featured in an ad on the local public television station. Sharon's shop, plus 22 other retailers in the Washington Town Commons, got together and decided to do a television commercial. Sharon knows the television advertising has worked and has had visitors who drove over an hour to visit Stitch By Stitch after

seeing her shop featured in the commercial. Sharon explained that the ad was put together by a production group from Colorado who helped each shop owner write a script about their business and then assisted them during the filming of the ad. The cost of production plus air time on local public television (2 times daily June-October) was \$900. Hats off to Sharon and her staff for running a more than full time business!

I really enjoyed talking with Ramona Shrake at The Stitcher's Expression in Mattoon, Illinois. Ramona explained that their shop features mainly counted cross stitch products and caters mostly to local customers. However, during the month of June the shop gets a number of visitors from all

over the country who are attending the National Counted Cross Stitch Show which is held in nearby Arcola, Illinois. Since 1985 The NCCSS has been held

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annually at Rockome Gardens, a fifteen acre theme park located in the heart of Illinois Amish Country. The show includes a Stitcher's Challenge, classes, special country evening events, and even a chance to apply for the Linda Zearth Scholarship that assists two stitchers with funds to be able to attend the show. Approximately 400 pieces are entered each year in the national non-juried contest with the winners receiving over \$10,000 in cash, prizes and ribbons. The Stitcher's Express participates in the show's Country Evenings by opening their doors to stitchers during one evening of the NCCSS. The shop offers 15% off everything and hands out goodie bags and drinks while stitchers from all over the country browse. Other special events at the store include the annual Super Bowl Sunday and a variety of classes, many geared towards beginning stitchers. Ramona reports that the shop's web site (www.stitchersxpress.com) is up and running and has generated a number of sales—especially from those stitchers who have visited the shop during the Country Evenings. Sales at The Stitcher's Express have increased revenues each year for the last three years.

Take advantage of special events and attractions in your area to create your own unique events to attract customers. If your area is lacking in 'specialness', create your own events such as retreats, evening or early morning sales, and coordinate advertising with other shops in your district.

Finally, at The Dove's Eye in Boulder, Colorado, Nancy Boggio stated they are beginning to turn

their thoughts toward their FALL MADNESS SALES. This annual event is a warm up for the 'Camp Wanna Stitch,' a four day retreat which takes place at Peaceful Valley Ranch. Campers can choose from accommodations which include rustic cabins with hot tubs or a more traditional hotel area. The retreat's Thursday evening check-in is followed by a Happy Hour, plus dinner and a show and tell. Campers are given a 'homework challenge' when they register for camp and then bring their finished project to show off during the retreat. One year the homework challenge was a basic gingerbread boy. Some of the campers came up with some very original ideas which included a gingerbread boy with skates and even a hippie gingerbread boy. This year's campers will participate in an ornament contest based around a nutcracker a designer handed out at last year's camp. Over the next three days, the lucky 15 to 20 'Camp Wanna Stitch' attendees will eat, stitch, and have fun!

After talking with these three retailers from around the country it sounds as if all of them are thriving while working hard to offer special events that their customers will enjoy!

AnnaLee Waite is a Houston based needlework designer whose goal is to bring innovative designs to the needle arts which are an inspiration to the hand and the eye. Visit her web site at www.annalee.com to view her entire cross stitch collection. AnnaLee wishes to thank the shop owners who provided information for this article.

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