



York Region Knitting Guild

Aurora, Ontario

Imagine entering the door of a Yonge Street heritage shop in Aurora, Ontario, where brightly coloured yarns dazzle your eyes and inspire your senses as you make your way to the back of the store. You go up the back stairs into the brightly lit upper room and find a seat among the friendly group of knitters who are knitting and chatting while waiting for the meeting to begin. The person next to you admires your current project and you discuss where to find the yarn and the pattern. If you can imagine this, you are well on your way to becoming a member of the York Region Knitting Guild.

In November 1995, a group of knitters met at The Hill Knittery in Richmond Hill to start a knitting guild. The knitters were enthusiastic, an executive was chosen, a meeting night set and York Region Knitting Guild was launched. In 1999, The Hill Knittery closed and the Guild moved to Needles and Knits, in Aurora where the group has been meeting ever since.

The meeting format has not changed in 12 years beginning with Guild business followed by program or guest speaker and ending with “show and tell”. Over the years, some amazing guest speakers have visited. Sometimes the program involves a demonstration from a Guild member. In the summer, meetings are purely social because many members are on vacation.

Every autumn the Guild runs a bus trip to the Kitchener-Waterloo Knitter’s Fair in partnership with the Barrie Knitter’s Guild. This is always an enjoyable event for participants. Stores and individuals donate “bus prizes” and there are other draws as well. The trip home is always a “show and tell” of what everyone bought!

Another annual event is the UFO (UnFinished Objects) challenge. Participants list their UFOs at the September meeting and are challenged to finish them by the June meeting; they must bring in the finished item to prove their accomplishment. For each UFO finished, participants get a “gold star” and their name is entered into a draw for a knitting-related prize at the end of the year. Volunteers from the Guild also participate in the Yonge Street Fair in Aurora every summer promoting the art of knitting by teaching new knitters how to knit “right here, right now” and giving them free kits to take home to continue their learning.

Several designers belong to the Guild – notably Elizabeth Fallone, who designed the market bag project for this issue. Also, Monika Stragmilia, and Deb Gemmill of Cabin Fever are noted designer/members. Many Guild members design projects for themselves, for gifts, and to teach other members.

The projects members work on are as diverse as the knitters themselves. From “newbie” knitters working on their first scarves to expert knitters who are creating Kaffe Fassett masterpieces or designing their own projects, each contributes. Membership spans several generations and projects range from familiar sweaters and hats to gossamer beaded lace shawls, socks in all colours of the rainbow, and knitted beaded jewelry. An in-house workshop in November 2007 taught members how to knit beaded bracelets using Perle cotton and small beads and charms. Dozens and dozens of bracelets were shown at the December meeting just in time for Christmas giving.

Guild members don’t knit just for themselves; donations of yarn are knit into hats, scarves, mittens, baby items, sweaters, blankets and toys for local charities. Recent recipients of donations have been The Rose of Sharon (a program for young mothers and their children), The Yellow Brick House (a local women’s shelter), North York Community House (offering programs for youth and recent immigrants to Canada), and the Special Care Nursery and Cancer units at Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket. Last year, in a group effort, along with several donors, the Guild was able to donate over 320 handmade items to charity! Of special note is one member who hand knit 40 teddy bears. The “Charity Knitting Queen” (a new Executive position) was able to book passage for the bears on a ship going to Zambia with a missionary family.

During the past 12 years of the York Region Knitting Guild, new friends have been made, new skills learned, and the enjoyment of knitting has been enriched and shared. The Guild members look forward to many more years of clicking needles and shared yarns.



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The Market Bag



Project designed by Elizabeth Fallone