

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LEOLA — Cuddly teddy bears, smiling dolls, Amish quilts, hand-crafted furniture, and many other crafts fill the rooms of Country Charm House of Crafts in Leola.

Blanche Myer, proprietress of Country Charm, opened her business at 247 Main Street in Leola on March 1 and will be holding her grand opening this week.

Blanche had previously worked in several gift shops and decided to

open one herself when the opportunity presented itself.

"This is my first adventure," she explained with a smile.

When the building that once housed the Country Bear gift shop became available, "I just found it was an opportunity and I took it," she said.

Local craftsmen make most of the items in her shop, selling them on consignment. Blanche said she had to search for a number of her suppliers, but added that many of

the craftsmen who sold their goods in the Country Bear also sell in her shop.

While many of her customers are tourists, Blanche said some of the local people also come in to shop. Right now her daughter, Sandy, helps her wait on the customers, but she anticipates that by summer she will have to hire someone else.

Blanche said the shop is her venture, but her husband, Don, helps out whenever possible.

"I really feel like we work at it together," she said.

Don makes clothes racks to sell in the store and fills in for her at the shop whenever he can.

Part of the shop's appeal comes from the uniqueness of the goods within. The quilts are handsewn by local Amish and Mennonite women and some of the furniture is made by a local craftsman who will customize furniture for Blanche's customers.

"I like the challenge of finding something that's attractive and unique," Blanche said, describing her search for items to sell in her shop.

One of the most unique items at Country Charm is a wooden teddy bear rocker made by Dawn Roser of York County. The rocker comes with a safety belt to secure small children and has gadgets attached for them to play with. Dawn signs and dates each chair and will engrave the child's name on the bottom as well, Blanche noted. She has made only three such rockers so far - the first one for a gift, the second one for her child and the third one for Blanche to sell.

"That will hold value for a long time," Blanche said looking at the little rocker.

Blanche said she also enjoys the challenge of helping her customers find a quilt to fit their decor or



Blanche Myer and her daughter, Sandy, talk over an order in the front section of Country Charm craft shop.



This teddy bear rocker made by Dawn Roser, York, is the third one made and the first of its kind offered for sale.

helping them select the colors and patterns to have one custom made.

Custom-made quilts are available to both local and out-of-town customers, Blanche said. She will take the the customers' order and then send them samples of the material that will be used in their quilt so they can see if it will match their room and needs.

Raised on a Lancaster County farm where her father still farms, Blanche is familiar with the county's customs and traditions. Her knowledge allows her to guide customers who want a traditional Amish quilt in the right direction.

"Anybody that really wants a

traditional quilt will want that," she says, pointing to a quilt made in bright solid colors.

Amish women, she explained, use only solid colored material in quilts for their own homes.

When Blanche finds a few spare minutes in her busy schedule, she enjoys swimming and working in her rose garden.

But most of the time she is in her shop, pleasantly greeting customers, helping them find just the right gift, or thinking up new ideas for her shop.

"I've got all kinds of ideas," she says with a with a twinkle in her eye.

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