



Marian Whetstone and Mabel Jordan help Marian's grandson display his hand-knit sweater.

Limited Vision Doesn't Keep These Women From Knitting Top Quality Garments

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BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — Mabel Jordan is one of those ladies who doesn't believe in idle hands.

Six years ago, she was a widow, living on a small farm near Bedford and exploring the many craft interests she had developed throughout life.

When a local craft store approached her to give knitting lessons, she was quite willing to take on the challenge. What she didn't realize was that her first two students were going to be legally blind.

It was Lois Holleran, a lady with only 25 percent of her vision, who had persuaded Marian Whetstone, with only 3 percent of her vision to try taking lessons. "We thought we could learn in two lessons," Lois laughs now.

Lois and Marian have been to Beacon Lodge Summer Camp for the Blind and, there, had made friends with another blind friend who knitted.

"If she could do it I figured we could to," Lois laughs.

Since that time, all of the ladies

in Mabel's knitting class have gone to the Beacon Lodge, compliments of the local Lions Clubs.

Those two lessons have turned into more than 300, and, Mabel is still teaching on a weekly basis.

There are plenty of finished products and some of them won blue, red, and white ribbons in this year's Bedford County Fair. This feat is not a first for these ladies with limited vision. They have been entering knitted projects in the fair for several years and winning prizes.

Since the lessons began, Bernetta Smouse has also joined the group. At 82, she isn't about to sit in a rocking chair and do nothing. Instead, she has put her nimble fingers to work knitting mittens for the county's needy children and warm booties for guests in Cumberland and Hollidaysburg nursing homes. She has received special honors from RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Persons) for her efforts.

Her vision is 200/400 and Bernetta says she has been aided greatly by special glasses purchased from an optometrist in State College.

Most of Bernetta's creations become gifts as do those of Lois and Marian. The women knit sweaters in all styles and colors. A recent trendy project has been to cut the neckline from sweatshirts, hem them, and then add a knitted turtleneck.

This year, Lois won her first blue ribbon at the fair although she has won other colors in the years past. "My only problem is not having enough time to knit," she says.

She has two grandsons who receive a lot of her sweaters and an aunt in South Carolina is also grateful for her creations.

Marian, with the most limited vision, does all of her work by touch.

"I go on a lot of bus trips," Marian says. "And, when I knit going through a tunnel, no one can understand how I see what I am doing. Truth is, I often knit in the dark."

Marian also babysits her two-year-old grandson and plays the piano and organ at church.

"Keeping the baby isn't difficult," she explains. "After all, I raised my own children when I couldn't see. I don't always get his face perfectly clean, but that's about the worst problem I have."

Meanwhile, Mabel oversees all of the work. "When I find a mistake, I rip it out," she says.

Mabel has also had some major changes in her life in the last six years. She has married a local lawyer and moved into town. She has kept her farm, however, and has a hired farmer who raises dairy cows, chickens, and has two draft horses.

She admits she was a little scared when two legally blind ladies showed up for her first class. "But, I just did the best I could," she remembers. "I worked by trial and error. Sometimes I would stand behind them and work over their shoulders to get a feel for what they were doing."

"As for our future, we may go to our graves knitting," Mabel said.



Lois Holleran works on a Christmas project while some of her finished products are on the table.



Barnetta Smouse has been recognized by RSVP for her donation of mittens and slippers to charities.

Homestead Notes
