



Julie assists sewers with a project during one of her sessions.

Julie Wegelin Opens Sewing Cellar

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READING (Berks Co.) — Julie Wegelin's Sewing Cellar is proof that home sewing is not a dying art nor is interest in home sewing dwindling.

In a cellar beneath her Reading urban home, Julie teaches sewing lessons ranging from basic tailoring to bear making. She teaches 13 classes weekly.

She also designs patchwork clothing patterns that she sells privately and in a few specialty shops.

Julie's vibrant enthusiasm for sewing shines through as she offers help to those participating in her sewing classes.

Julie began sewing Barbie doll clothing at five years of age. By fourth grade, she was sewing her own clothing.

Her sewing expertise at such a young age is all the more amazing because Julie said that she had a severe learning disability in reading and spelling.

She couldn't read, but learned to stitch together clothing by looking at the illustrations on the pattern sheet. When puzzled, she asked her mother to read the instructions aloud. Although her mother sewed very little, she encouraged Julie to sew and patiently read the pattern instructions whenever needed.

"I sewed all the time," Julie said of her growing-up years in upstate New York. The family moved to Berks County when Julie was in 11th grade. By then, Julie had completed all her graduation requirements in subjects other than English. To her delight, she was allowed to take sewing classes five



Julie offers both open sewing classes where sewers select a project of their choice and classes where everyone works on the same project such as this creative vest.

periods a day during her junior and senior years.

She overcame her learning disability enough to make straight A's except in English through high school and at Harcum Junior College, where she studied fashion design.

At college she learned to take ideas and put them into pattern form. Most of her sewing efforts were in tailoring and in bridal wear for other people.

"Quilting didn't interest me back then. I thought it a bit silly to cut fabric into small pieces and put it together again," Julie said.

Four years ago, Julie made a

patchwork quilt. She loved it so much that she came up with several ideas for incorporating patchwork into clothing. Often she uses checkerboard squares, diamonds, and prairie points at the hems and borders. The dress patterns range in size from petite to 2x, but are designed to fit loosely to eliminate fitting problems.

Blue jean patchwork is popular with her clientele. Julie designed a vest and a "barn jacket" made out of old jeans and formed into a patchwork pattern using the strip quilting method.

"The nice thing about people taking my classes is that no two



Julie Wegelin designed and stitched the quilted dress she is wearing and the one on the left, which has been selected to appear in a national quilt show in California.

projects ever look the same because people add some of their own ideas and they use different shades of jeans," Julie said. "I could never imagine all the possibilities myself."

She sells several dress styles under her pattern label. Two of Julie's sample dresses were selected to appear in a national quilt show in California.

Julie married in 1983, and the couple now have five children ranging in ages from 18 months to 14 years. Since Julie teaches so many sewing classes, her husband prepares the meals and the children do much of the cleaning and laundry.

Julie only began her business in January. "I picked something that I was good at and started a business," she said.

In the areas with which she needed help to continue a successful business, she relied upon outside help. She said that the Berks County Penn State Cooperative Extension office was helpful in teaching her how to set up the business and in managing and marketing. Four times a year, Julie publishes a 16-page newsletter called "The Sewing Gazette," which carries up-to-date information on sewing equipment, new items to make sewing easier, sewing hints, a list of workshops, and other helpful information.

Julie is a bit amazed at the popularity of her courses, which now demand 13 classes weekly. In addition to teaching in the home, she also teaches classes at several sewing centers and fabric shops.



This barn jacket is made from different denim shades of old jeans and sewn on a serger. Julie designed the pattern, which can be purchased from her and made at home or made during one of her sewing classes.

In open sewing classes, each person selects their own sewing project. Julie limits class sizes to six persons since she gives individual attention to each.

If you are interested in more information about classes, new original patchwork patterns designed by Julie Wegelin, or "The Sewing Gazette", send for a catalog: Julie Wegelin's Sewing Cellar, 945 N. Forth St., Reading, PA 19601 or call (610) 376-3490.
E-mail: jwsewingcellar@juno.com.



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