

Figure Skating Club cuts the ice with both beginners and experts

By KAREN BOUGHTON
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With visions of Dorothy Hamill dancing in their heads, members of the Penn State Figure Skating Club practice everything from skating backwards to spinning on ice, in the Ice Pavilion from October to mid-April.

During these months, the club provides approximately nine hours of ice time per week for its members. Each session provides members with time to skate freestyle or to practice skating routines.

"In a typical session, everybody gets on the ice and skates," Kathy Meyers (graduate-physics), co-faculty advisor of the club, said. "If you have questions about how to do some skill, people who are more advanced ice skaters will help you out. Members can even bring their own music to skate to."

The easy-going atmosphere of the skating sessions is what many of the members enjoy most about the club.

Meyers said the skating sessions create a very social atmosphere.

"It isn't like a phys ed class, with someone marking you," Meyers said. "There are also not any little kids tripping you up like in the public sessions at the ice rink."

"These sessions are definitely better than having to go to public sessions," Daniel Evans (9th-biology), another member of the club, said. "Although we have to pay to be in the club, if you make most of the sessions, it comes out to be a bargain."

"There is room on the ice and plenty of space to do anything," Evans said. "You just go around in a circle at public sessions. There are also people to help you out and the ice is a lot better."

There are approximately 100 members in the ice skating club this year, compared to 140 members last year, Meyers said.

"During the very cold weather this winter, there has been low attendance at

sessions but we do average about 30 people at each session now," Karen Higashida (9th-biological health), president of the club, said. "We encourage beginners. In fact the majority of the club members are beginners."

"The beginners are the backbone of the figure skating club," Meyers said.

Meyers also said that there have been times in the history of the figure skating club when people who were beginners were not welcome.

"We felt that they should learn how to skate in phys ed classes," Meyers said. "This year, however, we have a very good program. We have been able to help everyone, beginners and advanced."

Meyers has been involved with the skating club as long as it has been in existence.

"In 1967 the club was started. A bunch of us used to meet at the rink on Tuesdays and Thursdays and soon the

Figure Skating Club was formed from our group," Meyers said.

Although competition with other universities is not feasible for the club, its members hope to show their talents to the public by sponsoring an ice show in April. The club is planning to feature dance routines, freestyle skating routines and comedy acts in the show.

"We had a little exhibition last year, but there was not a very good turnout," Meyers said. "This year we want to go all out if we can."

Also in April, the United States Figure Skating Association will send representatives to judge members of the club in a series of proficiency tests.

Great proficiency in figure skating, however, is not important to the members of the figure skating club.

"What I like best is the people," Higashida said. "Even when I'm helping out beginners that's fun for me."

"It's a very friendly way to learn how to skate," Meyers said.



Photo by Joe Tori

Daniel Evans (9th-biology) takes advantage of the nine hours of ice time provided for members of the Penn State Figure Skating Club each week. Although skaters must pay to join the club, Evans said it turns out to be a bargain if you make most of the sessions.

Quilters preserve tradition, raise incomes



Photos by Jeff Pflister

The Penns Valley Quilters, above, members of Village Crafts, Inc., work on a quilt in the home of Helen Decker in Spring Mills. Village Crafts, Inc., is a non-profit organization which helps low-income people supplement their earnings by selling their handicrafts. From left to right, Pat O'Neal, Lois Witmer, Esther Wall, Marian Ziegler and Helen Decker work on the quilt in which they have already invested 150 hours. The women meet three days a week to work on the quilt. The quilt is entirely hand-made; machine quilting, although a time-saver,

"is a kind of sacrilege," according to Village Crafts field worker Lynn-Ellen Dixon. The quilt is on order to a couple in Los Angeles and will probably cost approximately \$415. The Village Crafts quilters also made a grant as a Bicentennial gift from Pennsylvania to the White House through a grant from the Governor's Council on the Arts. Helen Decker, far left, works intently on the quilt, which depicts a Pennsylvania farm scene. Decker has been quilting for over 20 years and helps teach others to quilt.



Pat O'Neal, left, one of the founders of Village Crafts, Inc., and a volunteer member of the Penns Valley Quilters, and Esther Wall, right, work on a quilt.

Village Crafts

By DIANA YOUNKEN
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Inside a white clapboard house by the small stream that runs through Spring Mills, five women are busy stitching memories in time and preserving tradition.

Three days a week the Penns Valley Quilters gather around their bold and colorful masterpiece, a Pennsylvania farm scene stretched across a massive wooden frame that nearly fills an entire room. Sometimes they tell old stories, talk about singing but don't practice at all, or they say nothing as their hands move swiftly with the needle. A reflective, peaceful spirit pervades the room.

They are members of Village Crafts, Inc., a non-profit organization founded in 1971 that tries to help low-income people supplement their earnings by selling their handcrafted work. "One of our prime goals is to preserve the traditional handicrafts, particularly local," says Village Crafts field worker Lynn-Ellen Dixon.

Nearly 150 people share in this cooperative effort and for the quilters it's "a learning process." "We share each other's knowledge," one of the women says.

Some workers are temporarily or permanently unemployed, over half are elderly, and many of them are young mothers, most of whom live in rural areas, according to Dixon. Others are

mentally retarded or handicapped. "We haven't been able to include all of the handicapped we'd like to because of lack of staff," Dixon says.

Although 80 per cent are considered low-income according to state guidelines, anyone can join Village Crafts depending on his skills, Dixon says. Twenty per cent of each member's profits is placed in a general supply fund.

The retail store at Skytop on Route 322 sells wooden, copper-enameled, stuffed and patchwork toys and gifts but the group takes most pride in its quilts. "We feel our quilting is top-notch and it's becoming more widely recognized," Dixon says. So recognized, in fact, that Village Crafts received a grant from the Governor's Council on the Arts to design a quilt as a Bicentennial gift from Pennsylvania to the White House.

The quilt, which depicts Pennsylvania activities and crafts includes stitches by other Pennsylvania craftsmen, was to be displayed in the Visitor's Center in Washington but apparently has been temporarily mislaid due to the changeover in administrations, according to Dixon. The group plans to write Cong. Joseph Ammerman to inquire about its disappearance.

Private individuals from Philadelphia and Chicago have ordered quilts, according to Dixon, and the Penns Valley Quilters' current project — a Pennsylvania farm scene — is for a Los

Angeles couple who will pay about \$415 for it. "They were interested in a custom-made quilt that was unique," Dixon says.

And it is both, says O'Neal, who explains that quilts are made differently here than in the South or in New England. "Pennsylvanians tend to enjoy the bolder-colored quilts," she says. "There is a pride in the fineness of the stitch and the curved lines of the quilting."

Most of these women didn't know how to quilt before they joined Village Crafts, according to O'Neal, who says she has learned a lot about design. "All of us have something to learn and we can get better at it," she says. "You learn a lot just through doing it."

Quilting is a sentimental experience for Helen Decker, who's been at it for more than 20 years and helps teach the others. "A lot of people say your hands should be engraved in gold," she says. "I wouldn't be able to sew if they were. The next one I make will be better."

The quilt is also significant because it's handmade; machine quilting "is kind of a sacrilege," Dixon says. O'Neal agrees: "You wouldn't get the group effect with machine quilting anymore," even though it would speed up production.

The fabric alone costs about \$40, and although the women have invested some 150 hours into the project so far they "do not make high money on this kind of

work," O'Neal says. According to Dixon, most members earn about \$30 to \$50 a month. More productive workers can make up to \$300 monthly on seasonal items.

Village Crafts was granted \$7,000 this year by the Governor's Council on the Arts and will apply for federal aid for next year. "But we're having the most trouble with local funding," O'Neal says, since people seem to think the organization is a private business.

According to a state Neighborhood Assistance act, local corporations now will receive a 50 per cent tax deduction from any donation to Village Crafts, Dixon says.

The group's main sales outlet is a wholesale catalog which is mailed to shops in almost every state including Hawaii and Alaska, Dixon says.

Sometimes the members will venture to state- and county-wide fairs together to show and sell their work, and they will take the best of their quilt collection to a Cincinnati fair at the end of April, she says.

Scrimping on food and shelter is a necessity but it's all part of the fun. "We've been known to sleep in the van and live on a 10-lb. bag of granola for a week," Dixon says. "That's a slight exaggeration, of course."

The Village Crafts store is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 to 4.