

Member Profile



Member Name: Sandy McKee
Company Name: The Top Drawer
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Length of time in business: owned 23 yrs, taught almost 30

Type of Shop: needlepoint

Q . What prompted you to go into business?

A. I used to teach at this shop, and when one of the previous owners wanted to retire, I bought her interest in the business. Later, when the remaining partner retired as well, I bought her share, and became the sole owner.

Q . What are the strengths of your shop?

A. One of the most outstanding strengths of our business is our excellent staff. They are knowledgeable, super-friendly, and extremely helpful to our customers. We feel like the customers are part of our extended needlearts family. Our sweet "shop dog," Abby, is a Golden Retriever which I rescued a few years ago, and she comes to work with me every day to help with welcoming duties.

Our staff makes it a pleasure to come in the shop, and we take time to add nice little touches such as fresh flowers on the counter. Near the entry we place an easel with a featured canvas and pulled threads to stimulate our customers' imagination and ideas. We're featuring bunnies and Easter eggs as I write this.

Our walls are filled with a variety of needlepoint canvases from which to choose. Our fiber area is a special place in the shop – so much color! There is a large table in the center on which we can work to help our customers pull their threads.

We also sponsor trunk shows at various times of the year spotlighting some of our favorite artists. This gives our customers a chance to see a large display of their creations.

Our location is beneficial as well. We're situated in a charming village east of Cincinnati, and the shop is housed in a lovely inn. The inn offers a beautiful view overlooking the town square, which is reminiscent of an English village. Our out-of-town customers enjoying staying at the inn while they are here for classes.

Exquisite, exacting finishing is an important priority for our customers' handiwork. We also finish pieces for other needlepoint shops across the US.

Our "ornament of the month" club has been very successful. Each sample canvas is stitched by a number of staff with careful attention to design and fiber. This year's theme is "Mini stockings." Next year our theme will be "A Few of Our Favorite Things."

I'm proud to say our shop helped the First Lady of Ohio, Hope Taft, to design and stitch four stools using architectural designs taken from iron work in the Governor's Residence. The stools were hand carved from Buckeye wood – We also helped design and stitch two large chairs (seat, back and arm covers) using Ohio wildflowers and native birds. It was a huge project. Many of the shop staff and customers stitched pieces. These pieces are on permanent display in the Governor's Residence.

Q. What types of education do you offer?

A. For educational purposes, we provide in-house instructors and also bring in nationally-known teachers. Our in-house artist is busy throughout the year and makes a wide variety of designs for our customers. These include adding names to stockings, creating canvases with images of a customer's home, custom belts, and a multitude of pillow designs.

Q. You have a charming, engaging Web site.

How has it helped your business?

A. Our Web site has allowed our business to "go international." There are many canvases shown on the site and that has proven to be a very good promotion for the shop and our special events. Setting the whole thing up was a real learning experience, and that learning is ongoing!



Colorful and attractive thread displays occupy this section of the shop.

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Bright canvases on display at The Top Drawer.

Q. What do you do for fun, and what's next?

A. Personally, my favorite thing to do (other than stitching) is to travel. This past year I spent time in Scotland with my cousin exploring our family's past in that area. I also took my grandson for a week to Costa Rica. What a highlight! The best thing was just being with him for an entire week. This year his brother and I are going to the Galapagos Islands. I love having all my family together, including my four grandchildren. Since all my family lives out-of-town, a get-together is a very special time and a wonderful, precious treat for me.

What's next? "As Forest Gump said...

'Life is like a box of chocolates ...'"



Another view of the thread displays to entice Sandy's customers.